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*Cleanth Brooks.*  
*Robert Penn Warren*

**MODERN RHETORIC**  
*Shorter Edition*



*Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.*  
*New York / Chicago / San Francisco / Atlanta*



**TO DAVID M. CLAY**

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# Preface

This edition of *Modern Rhetoric* has been substantially shortened. It is not intended to replace the longer edition, but is intended, rather, for courses where discussions as detailed as those in the regular edition are not needed and where the teacher wishes a free hand in selecting readings to accompany the study of rhetoric. In the process of shortening the book we have, naturally, made certain revisions.

With this shorter edition of *Modern Rhetoric* we have not changed our notion of what such a book should be. We are convinced that good writing is not merely a matter of rules or tricks but a natural expression of necessary modes of thought. Good writing cannot be learned—or cannot readily be learned—by a process of blind absorption, trial and error, or automatic conditioning. It is learned as the student becomes aware of the underlying principles. If, in the practical, day-to-day business of writing, the student can be made constantly aware of the principles underlying what he is trying to do, then he comes to a deeper realization of the workings of his own mind and feelings and, through that realization, to a greater skill in expressing himself.

Here we should like to repeat the acknowledgments previously made to friends of this book. Though these friends are many and all merit our deep gratitude, we wish to make special mention of Mr. Lloyd Bruno of Sacramento Junior College, Mr. Henry Cassady of Hartnell College, Mr. Sanford Kahrman of Columbia University, Mr. Daniel A. Lindley, Jr., the Reverend Dennis B. McCarthy, O.P., of Providence College, Mr. Ernest Nagel of Columbia University, Mr. George B. Rodman of the University of Wisconsin, Mr. Gerald A. Smith of the University of Rochester, Mr. Richard M. Weaver of the University of Chicago, Mr. Rulon Wells of Yale

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C. B.

R. P. W.

*March, 1961*

# Contents

## PART ONE: MAKING A BEGINNING

<i>Chapter One: Language, Thinking, and Rhetoric</i>	2
<i>Chapter Two: The Problem of Making a Beginning</i>	9
<i>Chapter Three: Organizing the Composition</i>	17
<i>Chapter Four: The Main Intention</i>	31

## PART TWO: THE FORMS OF DISCOURSE

<i>Chapter Five: The Methods of Exposition</i>	36
The First Method: Identification	41
The Second Method: Definition	42
The Third Method: Classification	60
The Fourth Method: Illustration	66
The Fifth Method: Comparison and Contrast	72
The Sixth Method: Analysis	80
<i>Chapter Six: Argument</i>	102
What Is Argument About?	106
Evidence	125
Reasoning	131
Persuasion	161
<i>Chapter Seven: Description</i>	165
The Dominant Impression	172
Texture and Pattern in Description	179

<i>Chapter Eight: Narration</i>	190
Time	191
Meaning	193
Pattern	197
Proportion	205
Selection	207
Point of View	208

### **PART THREE: SPECIAL PROBLEMS OF DISCOURSE**

<i>Chapter Nine: The Paragraph and the Sentence</i>	218
The Structure of the Paragraph	220
Linking Paragraph with Paragraph	226
Rhetoric and Grammar of the Sentence	229
<i>Chapter Ten: Diction</i>	249
Primary Meaning and Implied Meaning	249
Two Distinctions: General and Specific; Abstract and Concrete	251
Language Growth by Extension of Meaning	255
The Company a Word Keeps: Colloquial, Informal, and Formal	260
How Associations Control Meanings	263
Worn-Out Words and Clichés	266
<i>Chapter Eleven: Metaphor</i>	274
Importance of Metaphor in Everyday Language	275
The Function of Metaphor	280
What Makes a "Good" Metaphor?	286
<i>Chapter Twelve: Tone and Other Aspects of Style</i>	291
Tone as the Expression of Attitude	291
Tone as a Qualification of Meaning	296
The Special Audience and the Ideal Audience	309
Tone and Other Components of Style	310

## **PART FOUR: THE RESEARCH PAPER**

<i>Chapter Thirteen: Preparation and Note-Taking</i>	<b>318</b>
Sources	<b>319</b>
Bibliography	<b>320</b>
Notes	<b>325</b>
The Outline	<b>328</b>
The Form of Footnotes and Bibliography	<b>333</b>
<i>Chapter Fourteen: The Final Version: Writing and Rewriting</i>	<b>339</b>
Writing the Paper	<b>339</b>
Sample Research Paper	<b>357</b>



***Part One***  
***Making a Beginning***



# Chapter One

## Language, Thinking, and Rhetoric

What is this course all about? Is it concerned with commas and figures of speech and participial phrases? Does it have to do with outlining themes, constructing topic sentences, and working to achieve unity, coherence, and emphasis? These questions obviously have to be answered with a *yes*; but there is a larger sense in which the proper answer has to be *no*, for the essential purpose of this course goes far beyond the mere technicalities of grammar and rhetoric. Ultimately, this course engages your deepest needs and interests, your thinking, your feelings, your relationships with other people. These last assertions will not seem too sweeping when you realize that language is an indispensable instrument in the functioning of the human mind and personality and that rhetoric is the art of using language effectively.

If you doubt what has just been said, consider for a moment the college career before you. No matter what major interest you are to pursue in college, most of the instruction will be in language and you will be required to respond in language. If you do not understand language well and cannot use it effectively, the chances are that you will not do very well in college. When you leave this course, you will not, then, be through with the subject of language. You will be just beginning it. The analysis of city planning assigned for Government 11 and the textbook used in Astronomy 6 present complicated ideas through language, ideas more complicated than any you will commonly encounter here. The term paper you must write in Economics 114 and the essay questions in the Biology 63 examination will make greater demands on your use of language than any theme you will have to write in this course.

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### *How language shapes thought*

There is the joke about the old lady who, when asked to say what she meant, replied, "How can I know what I mean till I say it?" Was the old lady a scatter-brained rattletrap, or was she talking sense?

She was talking sense. Her retort is just one way of expressing an idea that, from our own experience, we all know to be true. How often have we felt that we knew our own minds perfectly on something or knew all about something, only to find, when we started to put what we knew into words—to tell about it or to write about it—that we didn't know our own minds at all or didn't know what we were talking about? We don't, generally, have an idea or a body of information all clear in our heads, thoroughly worked out and organized, and then set about reporting it in words. No, more usually, in order to get the idea clear or the body of information logically organized, we have to try to put it into words. When we try to frame even the simplest sentence, we are forced to establish a set of meaningful relations; that is, we are forced to think more clearly. We instinctively know this, and we imply as much when we say, "I must talk this out."

"Writing things out," which will be the main business of this course, is simply a more rigorous way of talking things out. It is a way of training the mind in logical thought. For one thing, in writing we must understand the structure of language, what the parts of speech do, how words relate to one another, what individual words mean, the rules of grammar and punctuation. For another thing, we must understand the principles of organizing a discourse; that is, how to go about explaining something, how to argue a point, how to tell about an event. Once we start putting into words an explanation—or an argument or an account of an event—we have to organize the material in a way that will be readily understood by others.

We must constantly remember, however, that neither the structure of language nor the organization of discourse is a matter of doing tricks with words. Both are patterns that embody the normal workings of the mind.

### *Language and feeling*

A human being isn't, of course, merely a machine for logical thought. Thought shades off into feeling, and feeling shades off into thought. We cannot exclude feeling from our experience, nor

do we wish to do so, but we do want our life of feeling and our life of thought to be consistent with each other, to make some kind of total sense. A person whose desires run counter to his judgment is bound for considerable unhappiness. This is not to say that his judgment is necessarily good and his desires necessarily bad. It may very well be the other way around. But if the desire and the judgment are not more or less consistent, that person will be constantly jangled and disorganized. We all want some degree of unity in ourselves, some harmony.

To gain this unity, this harmony, we need to be able not only to think straight but also to understand our own feelings and to see how they are related to each other, to our own general experience, and to the world around us. A considerable part of our use of language involves an attempt to clarify our feelings, to come to grips with them. We say, "Now that I've talked about it, I feel better." In other words, the talking-out process not only helps us make up our minds but helps us "make up our feelings," too.

As an instrument for expressing emotion, language necessarily undertakes to discriminate shades of feeling. The poet's metaphor and the schoolboy's bit of slang have this purpose in common — and the bit of slang may sometimes serve the purpose better than the poet's metaphor. At this point we cannot go into a discussion of the various means which language employs to make these discriminations — means such as figurative language, rhythm, tone, and so on, which we shall deal with later — but we can emphasize the fact that in discriminating shades of feeling, language helps us to understand our emotions and to understand ourselves.

We have been talking about language and feeling in relation to the individual. But the individual must constantly deal with the feelings of other people and constantly make his own feelings understood by others. He may be writing a letter of condolence to a bereaved friend, or trying to collect a bill or sell an insurance policy, or making an after-dinner speech at a club. In these and a thousand other situations of ordinary life a person needs to understand the feelings of others. Such occasions involve what we shall call problems of tone and attitude. To manipulate language so as to convey the proper attitude in a given situation will be a part of our study here. True skill in the use of language can scarcely be had apart from a knowledge of how words affect our fellow human beings. And a real command of the language is a powerful means for improving our relations with other people. Of course, we may be able to get along without skill in language. But why

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go through life under a handicap when there is a good opportunity, here and now, to overcome it?

### *What you bring to this course*

We have been saying that language is at the very center of the life of thought and the life of feeling for both the individual himself and the individual as a member of society. We have said this in order to indicate the final business of this course. Naturally, in this short space, we have not been able to explain fully why this idea is true. In fact, to explain it fully and finally would require not one book but a library of books.

These remarks may sound very grand and impressive — perhaps too grand and impressive — and may seem to cast an awesome shadow over the day-to-day business of studying exposition or description, of writing themes or exercises. They may sound so impressive, in fact, that you may feel somewhat shy of beginning.

But you should remember that you are not beginning at the beginning. You have behind you many years of effort which can be made to apply to the writing you now do. You are already the beneficiary of a long training.

This training has not been wholly, or even in large part, in writing, in the study of grammar and the writing of weekly themes. These things have been part of your training, and a very important part, but it cannot be said that they are the most important part of the training on which you can now draw as you come to this course.

### *Past experience with language*

In the first place, your sense of language was not acquired primarily from books. You began the process of learning language when you were an infant, and the process has continued ever since. Books have helped you, and they will help you even more, toward an effective use of language. They will broaden your vocabulary and give you a sense of the subtleties and shadings of words. But you, like any normal person of your age, are already the master of enormous resources in your native tongue.

### *A capacity for straight thinking*

In the second place, your experience has given you a great range of subjects and a capacity for thinking logically about them. Almost any event of your day, any sport or craft which you understand, any skill or technique which you possess, any scene which you have

witnessed, any book or article which you have read, any person whom you know — is a potential subject. And any one of them can become interesting in so far as it is actually important to you and in so far as you can think straight about it.

### *A broad social experience*

In the third place, all your experiences with other people in the past have provided a training that will help you adjust yourself to your intended reader. Your social experience, from your early childhood, has given you a training in tact, in grasping the truth about a human relationship, in adjusting your manner to the mood or prejudice of another person in order to convince, persuade, entertain, or instruct him. Every child is aware that when he wants something from his mother or father, there is a right way to go about asking for it and a wrong way. And he knows that what is the right way for asking his mother may very well be the wrong way for asking his father. No doubt, the child never explains his actions to himself in these terms, but he acts on the truth behind them.

The discussion in this section comes to this: You already possess a great deal more of the equipment of the writer than you realize. All of your experience in the past can be said, without too much wrenching of fact, to have been a training for the writing which you will now do. Your problem is, in part, to learn to use the resources which you already possess in order to improve your sense of language.

### ■ *Applications*

The exercises given here are to suggest to you some of the questions involved in writing. The first group has to do with the meanings of individual words. The second group has to do with the meanings of passages. Consider the questions carefully, and try to analyze your responses to the word or passage involved. In explaining your responses you are using words. Are you saying what you mean? Did you know what you meant before you tried to put it into words?

- I Here you are to match words for meaning. Choose the word in the right-hand column that in your opinion comes closest to giving the meaning of the word to the left. Some of the words, of course, are not closely synonymous. Often even the closest synonym has some important shade of difference in

meaning. Can you state whatever difference in meaning you find between the word on the left and the word you choose as closest to it? (When you have completed the exercise, check in the dictionary to see which words it regards as synonyms.)

<b>1</b> success	result	<b>2</b> spite	irritability
	achievement		rancor
	luck		unforgivingness
	money		hate
	fame		mercilessness
	happiness		
	respect		

<b>3</b> subversion	craftiness	<b>4</b> hopelessness	despair
	treason		desperation
	substitution		stoicism
	defalcation		failure
	dishonesty		timidity
	overthrow		
	innocuousness		

**II** For each of the following five sentences decide whether the italicized word is the most appropriate to the meaning and tone of the sentence or whether one of the synonyms listed below it would be preferable. Be prepared to explain your choice.

- 1** On any person who desires such *queer* prizes, New York will bestow the gift of loneliness and the gift of privacy.

unique          odd          strange          unusual

- 2** It is this *largess* that accounts for the presence within the city's walls of a considerable section of the population . . .

generosity          liberality          bounty          abundance

- 3** New York *blends* the gift of privacy with the excitement of participation . . .

combines          merges          mixes          amalgamates

- 4** A man was killed by a falling cornice. I was not a party to the tragedy, and again the inches counted *mightily*.

seriously          heavily          weightily          importantly

- 5** Not many among them [the commuters] have ever spent a *drowsy* afternoon in the great rustling oaken silence of the

reading room of the Public Library, with the book elevator (like an old water wheel) *dropping* books onto the trays.

sleepy	lazy	restful	quiet
spewing out	vomiting	pouring out	ejecting

- Here is a pair of passages. One represents the original form of the passage; the other has been rewritten to garble the vocabulary or blur the meaning in some other way. Choose the “good” passage, and write a brief statement explaining your choice.

- 1 To an outlander a stay in New York can be and often is a series of small embarrassments and discomforts and disappointments: not understanding the waiter, not being able to distinguish between a sucker joint and a friendly saloon, riding the wrong subway, being slapped down by a bus driver for asking an innocent question, enduring sleepless nights when the street noises fill the bedroom. Tourists make for New York, particularly in summertime — they swarm all over the Statue of Liberty (where many a resident of the town has never set foot), they invade the Automat, visit radio studios, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, and they window shop. Mostly they have a pretty good time. But sometimes in New York you run across the disillusioned — a young couple who are obviously visitors, newlyweds perhaps, for whom the bright dream has vanished. The place has been too much for them; they sit languishing in a cheap restaurant over a speechless meal.
- 2 For a tourist a visit to New York often can be embarrassing and uncomfortable and disappointing: he doesn’t understand the waiter; he can’t tell the difference between a sucker joint and a friendly saloon; he gets on the wrong subway; he is spoken to rudely by a bus driver when he asks an innocent question; he has sleepless nights when the street noises fill the bedroom. Tourists like to come to New York, particularly in summertime — they run all over the Statue of Liberty (where many a resident never goes); they go to the Automat, they visit radio studios and St. Patrick’s Cathedral; they window shop, and they usually have a pretty good time. But sometimes you see disappointed tourists — a young couple who are obviously visitors, newlyweds perhaps, who are not enjoying themselves. The place has been too much for them; they sit bored in a cheap restaurant over a silent meal.

## Chapter Two

# The Problem of Making a Beginning

In the preceding chapter we have tried to answer the question: "What is the ultimate purpose of the study of writing?" The next question is: "Where should the study of writing begin?" Should it begin with the medium — that is, with a study of words? With the subject — that is, with the ideas that one wishes to express? Or with the occasion — that is, the situation in which the writer finds himself with respect to a particular audience?<sup>1</sup> It is impossible to say that any one of these considerations is more important than the two others, and it is also impossible to say that one of the three should logically precede the others, since they are all intimately related.

We might argue, if we liked, that we should begin with the medium, with the study of words, and then move by easy stages from diction through the next larger units, the sentence and the paragraph, and then on to the general problems of organization to be met in the whole theme.

But we could counter this argument by pointing out that when we choose words, we choose them in relation to other words, in relation to the general subject about which we mean to write, and in relation to our attitude toward our reader (that is, in relation to the *occasion*). In the same way, we could argue that the study of the sentence, important as it is, should not necessarily precede the study of problems of general organization. For it is the pattern of sentences, the relation of sentences to one another, that defines the progression of our ideas. In writing, we are first concerned — just as we are finally concerned — with our complete utterance, our

<sup>1</sup> With regard to this matter of the audience we shall have a good deal to say later in this book. Chapter 12 in particular deals with the audience and with the whole problem of attitude toward the audience and toward the material to be discussed.



over-all idea, our main purpose. Therefore, there is something to be said for our beginning, as we do here, with problems of general organization. Those problems usually first take specific form in the writer's attempt to come to grips with his subject.

### ***Finding a true subject***

Your constant practical task as a student, not only in this course but in many other courses, will be to write compositions, essays, and reports. In any kind of writing your first problem is to establish a clearly defined subject. In other words, you have to know exactly *what* you are writing about. Unless you can do this, you cannot handle the second problem, which is to develop that idea clearly and forcefully. You must think before you write; and you must think as you write.

First, what is a usable subject? The answer depends in part upon the scope of your composition. Your subject must be so limited as to allow you to say all that has to be said about it in the number of words that you have allotted yourself. But on the other hand, it must be ample enough to provide matter, without padding, for the allotted words. The more usual problem for the student, however, is the former, that of too broad a subject. Often the student chooses a subject that turns out to be too vague, too inclusive. In trying to deal with it, he feels as though he were attempting to grasp a handful of fog. "George Washington," for instance, may sound like a subject that one could write on. But is it? Obviously, it would require several fat volumes to say everything that could be said about the topic of George Washington. So the topic must be narrowed, and the direction of the narrowing will depend in great part upon our interests. Are we interested in saying something about "George Washington as a Colonial Planter," or "George Washington's Development as a Leader," or "What the Frontier Taught George Washington," or "George Washington as a Statesman," or "The Influence of George Washington on American Political Thought," or "Myths about George Washington," or "The Courtship of George Washington," or "George Washington as a Military Strategist"? These titles indicate only a few of the various kinds of interest in Washington; and because each represents a special focus of interest, each is (or at least tends to be) a true subject. A *true subject* is a topic brought to focus.

## ■ *Application*

Below is a list of topics. None of them is a true subject, because they are all too general. Select five topics from the list and frame three true subjects for each.

Divorce	Reading
The United Nations	Communism
Alcoholic beverages	A church
Public education	The postal service
The jury system	The American Indian
Robert E. Lee	The revolver
Abraham Lincoln	Patriotism
The income tax	River traffic
Amateurism in sport	Shakespeare's plays
Military training	Thrift

## *Main divisions of a discourse*

Once you have found your true subject, one that you can really write about, you must consider the general organization into which your writing will fall. You know that there will be an *introduction*, a *body of discussion*, and a *conclusion*. Very probably in trying to settle on your true subject you have already struck on some of the main points, perhaps all of the main points, which will be presented in the discussion. You may also have organized these points into an outline. But how do you get to the discussion? How do you write the first sentence? The first paragraph?

## *Introduction*

The introduction must really introduce. But introduce what? And introduce to whom? The answer to the first question seems easy. The reader is entitled to know as soon as possible what business is in hand. Your title probably tells him something, but the introduction must limit and fix the subject more precisely; it must suggest to the reader what the central idea is and how the writer intends to present it. Here is the first paragraph of a 'home with the title "Sam Houston as a Youth":

Sam Houston grew up in a world that was very different from the one in which most boys now live. His world, so filled with adventure, has always interested me, as it would interest anyone of my age who has a taste for the outdoors and exciting action. But long ago I became interested also in the effect that the world of Sam Houston's youth had upon him. Houston became a great man, a frontiersman, a politician,

a soldier who conquered Santa Anna and gained Texas independence, and the first president of the Republic of Texas. It is interesting to see how a person's youth helps determine the kind of man he becomes.

The writer has given us our bearings. We know that there will be some contrast, stated or suggested, between the world of the young Houston and our world. We are told who Houston was and given some notion of his achievements. We are told the line the writer will follow: He intends not merely to give a list of events, however interesting in themselves, but to indicate how those events affected Houston's character and achievements, the central idea of the theme. We are thus well prepared for the body of the theme.

A theme about the youth of Houston is, however, longer and more ambitious than any that you will soon be called upon to write. It is the kind of research paper, or long essay, that will come later in the course. Here is the introduction of a much simpler theme, with the title "Why I Am Glad I Went to a Country School":

Not long ago I saw a newspaper advertisement which cast some slurs on the old-fashioned "little red school house" because it did not have modern conveniences and a school cafeteria and a gymnasium. I did not go to a little *red* school house, but the color of the paint, what paint there was left on my school, was the only difference. Then for a year I went to a big county consolidated school. So I feel qualified to have an opinion. I want to write of some of the things I think more important than running water, cafeterias, and gymnasiums.

We do not yet know what things the writer thinks more important than running water, cafeterias, and gymnasiums, but we are ready for what he has to say about them. We know what has moved him to write the theme, and we know the personal experience that qualifies him to have an opinion. A reference to one's personal experience with the subject under discussion can be a useful method for constructing an introductory paragraph.

So far we have been concerned with our first question: "Introduce what?" When we turn to the second question: "Introduce to whom?" we are concerned with what we have called the *occasion* of our composition — the kind of reader we are writing for, his attitude toward us and what we are writing about, and our attitude toward him. Before you begin to write, it is wise to ask yourself some questions about the occasion, questions that will serve as a guide primarily for the introduction but also, to some extent, for the development of the theme as well.

1. Does the reader have any interest in my subject, or must I try to attract his attention?

2. If I have to attract his attention, how do I go about it?
3. How ignorant is he of my subject? How much do I have to explain to him to give a background for my discussion?

If we assume that the reader is already more or less interested in our subject, then the introduction itself may be properly concerned with presenting what background we think necessary for the discussion. We have moved on to question 3. All we need to do is simply to state our subject and fix its limits. For example, here is the beginning of a student theme called "Backcourt Strategy in Tennis":

Anyone who plays tennis knows what I mean by backcourt strategy, and anyone who does not play tennis would never know what I meant, no matter how many words I used. You may have split-second coordination and a good wrist and a quick foot, but none of these assets is any good to you if you can't out-think your opponent.

The device used here is that of a definition of the reader for whom the student is writing as well as of the subject about which he is writing. The writer has put his cards on the table. He is writing strictly for tennis players, that is, for a special reader who is keenly interested in the subject and who needs no general instruction in the game. This writer can thus move quickly into the development of his subject. He has warned off duffers and general readers.

With the general reader who is already interested but who does not have the background information, the problem is different. He must be given his bearings as quickly and simply and systematically as possible. Here is the beginning of a theme called "Jet Pilots Are Human":

As new planes fly higher and faster every day, we begin to feel that there is no limit to what the designers and engineers can do. But we tend to forget one thing. There are no new designs for the human body and there are no new models being built in the hush-hush atmosphere of the experimental shop. The pilot is of the old model, and we have to think of what speed and altitude do to his "liver and lights" and how much sloshing around he can stand.

What has the writer done in this paragraph? He has corrected a misconception that the general reader may well have—the idea that design and engineering are the only important factors in the future of aviation. And he has given a preliminary, general statement of the problem of the body in flight, which is his central idea. He has built his introductory paragraph around an important

fact, a fact that we are likely to forget but must not be allowed to forget.

There is no certain formula for the beginning paragraph. How to start it is largely a matter of common sense. Try to put yourself in the reader's place, and ask yourself what preliminary information you would need to follow the discussion intelligently; then state that information as simply and economically as you can. But here is a caution. You may find that your introduction is running away with you, that it is becoming a theme in itself. If so, you probably have not limited your subject closely enough. Perhaps the introductory material contains the real subject you should treat.

Up to this point we have been assuming a willing and interested reader. But suppose that he is not interested and that you must catch his attention. How do you go about that? In the sample paragraphs already discussed we have more than hinted at some ways of solving this problem. On many occasions you yourself have been the uninterested reader who, idly thumbing through a magazine or newspaper feature section, has been caught by the first few sentences of an article and has gone on to read the whole piece. In his opening sentences, the skillful writer has shown that something previously uninteresting to you bears on your welfare, your health, your ambitions and aspirations, your pocketbook, your prejudices, your patriotism, your religion, your education. Or he may simply have shown the general human interest in a subject that you had thought abstract and dull.

The author of the following paragraph is making a bid for the reader's attention by showing how his subject, "The Alaskan Islands," might affect the personal life of his reader:

There was a time when I thought that geography was the boring subject that happened in the first period after the noon recess or that it was the pictures in the old *National Geographic* magazines in the dentist's office which you thumbed through while you were waiting for a new filling. But now I know that what the Arabs eat in Mecca or the Burmese gets as take-home pay affects our national security and our tax bill. This fact was brought home to me last summer when I went to Alaska and had the good fortune to be asked to go on a ten-day cruise through the Aleutian Islands in a private boat. Those islands are steppingstones between America and Asia, and you know that you can go two ways on steppingstones.

Having challenged the reader to accept his point of view about geography, the writer concludes his paragraph with what will be-

come the chief point to be made in his theme: the military importance of the Aleutians.

Again, it must be conceded that there is no formula for catching the reader's interest in an introduction. The best advice is to put yourself in the place of your imaginary reader. What would catch your attention? You are as good an example of the general reader as anyone.

We have taken a good deal of space in discussing the introduction. But the introduction is extremely important. For the reader, it is the first impression, and first impressions tend to color subsequent impressions. And for you, the writer, the introduction is equally important; a good notion of how to write an introduction tends to diminish what the great novelist Joseph Conrad called "the terror of the blank page." When you can write a first paragraph, you have taken a long step toward the end of your theme.

We shall now make a suggestion, however, that may seem to contradict what has just been said. Sometimes the way to write a good introduction is not to begin the actual process of writing with the introduction. It may be a good idea to plunge straight into the body of the theme and follow through to the end. Then ask yourself what you have accomplished, what needs to be said in the introduction to give the reader his bearings for what you have already put down. As we saw earlier on page 3, it often occurs that we know what we want to say only after we have tried to express it in words.

This introduction-in-reverse process should not be used regularly, but it may help give you a better sense of the relation between the introduction and the body of the theme. When the introduction is written *before* the rest of the theme, it may be well to reconsider it after the body of the theme has been completed. In the light of the completed theme, you may be able to make very useful revisions.

### *The body of the discussion and the conclusion*

For the present, we shall take very little space to discuss the body of the discourse and the conclusion. There is a good reason for this, for everything we shall be doing in this course from this point on will be a way of studying how to develop the main body of the discussion. Suffice it to say here that the body of the discussion should not betray the promise of the introduction. You have promised the reader to develop a fixed and limited subject along a certain line. Having made this promise, keep it.

About the conclusion there are one or two things that ought to be said. A short theme often does not need a formal conclusion. The paragraph making the last important point, or the climactic point, may constitute a thoroughly adequate conclusion, provided always that the theme has a sound general organization.

But whether your concluding paragraph is elaborate or simple, it occupies one of the two naturally emphatic positions in the composition. Moreover, it constitutes your last chance at your reader. Failure at this point may well mean failure for the whole piece of writing. You must avoid two things: blurred effect, that is, a mere trailing off or vague generalities, and repetitious summary. The conclusion must really "conclude" the discussion; the theme should not simply stop as if you had suddenly become tired or run out of ink. A summary is one way of making a genuine conclusion; but if a theme is short and well organized, the reader should already have the thing as a whole pretty clearly in mind, and there is no need to go back over all the ground. Put your finger on your main point, on what you want to bring to focus. Then write your conclusion on that point.

### ■ *Applications*

- I Bring to class a good example of an interest-catching introduction from some magazine or newspaper feature article. What appeal does it make? What kind of conclusion does the article have?
- II Go back to the Application in this chapter (page 11) in which you were asked to frame several true subjects from a list of general topics. Select one of the true subjects you have framed, and write a brief introductory paragraph, say 75 to 100 words, for an interested but uninformed reader. Select another subject and write an introduction which must attract an uninterested reader.
- III Read the opening paragraphs of "A True Patriot" (page 55). What appeals to the reader's interest does the author try to make? Does he convince you that his subject is "important"? Even if you agree that it is important, has he given adequate reasons for its importance?

## Chapter Three

### Organizing the Composition

The division into introduction, body, and conclusion, or, if you like, into beginning, middle, and end, is the natural sequential division of a piece of writing. It is the mode of organizing that naturally occurs to anyone who is getting down to the actual business of writing, whatever the topic. But there is another threefold set of terms that is also fundamental to any process of composition. They are *unity*, *coherence*, and *emphasis*.

Any sound piece of writing will exemplify these three principles, and a study of them is our first step toward understanding how to develop the main body of a discussion and how to relate it to the introduction and the conclusion.

#### *Unity*

Any good piece of writing has unity. The fundamental interest, which determines the writer's subject, must permeate the whole composition. The composition must be *one* thing — not a hodge-podge. We have already encountered the demands made by unity in our discussion of the matter of finding a true subject. "George Washington," we said, is too vague to be a true subject; it includes too many things. It lacks the unity of such a limited topic as "What the Frontier Taught George Washington."

Unity is not an arbitrary thing, a limitation imposed from the outside. It is simply an indication that the writer's mind can work systematically and can, therefore, arrive at a meaning. A unified composition indicates that the writer's ideas about his subject are unified, that he is not scatterbrained. But unity is not always easily achieved.



Suppose that you are given "Preparing for a Career" as a topic for a theme. After turning it over in your mind a few times, you realize that this topic includes too many possibilities to constitute a true subject. Therefore, your first step toward gaining unity is to limit and fix the subject. You bring your own interest to bear upon the topic. For example, you are a college freshman, and you are beginning to prepare for a career as a civil engineer. You decide, therefore, to call your theme: "Why I Wish To Be an Engineer." This title is more limited than the more general "Preparing for a Career," and it has the merit of drawing upon subject matter with regard to which you rightfully believe that you have some competence — the state of your own mind.

The essay is to be short. You do not plan an elaborate introduction or conclusion. The introduction will simply make reference to your own experience with the subject (see page 12). The conclusion can be a sentence or two in which you will reaffirm your main point, your choice of a career. Following is a theme such as you might write:

#### WHY I WISH TO BE AN ENGINEER

Choosing one's life work is about the most important decision that a person ever has to make. Many of my friends are still undecided about what they want to be. But my choice has been an easy one. For nearly as long as I can remember I have wanted to be an engineer.

I suppose that one reason why I want to be an engineer and have made my college plans in that direction is that my father is an engineer. He was a student here at the State University back in 1909-1914. He began his college career with the intention of being a doctor, but he soon changed his mind. He finished his course in 1914 and worked as a draftsman for two years in Chicago in an engineering firm. But World War I got him into the army, and he wound up a major in the Engineering Corps. His war experience was valuable to him in more ways than one, for he says it taught him how to deal with men of all kinds and to get work done under pressure. Also, it meant that he acquired a taste for action and adventure. After the war, he went to Mexico and worked on building a railroad in the mountains. He had many difficult construction problems to solve there. I was born in Mexico, and I was raised in a family where engineering was discussed all the time, for my mother was interested in my father's work.

There is a great future for an engineer in this country. It is true that during the depression many engineers were out of work, but that was true of many occupations and professions. Besides, many of the engineers out of work were not well trained to begin with. If you are really well trained and are willing to put out your best efforts, you can almost always get along. Engineering is especially important today, for

we are in the midst of a great technological revolution which will mean the rebuilding of much of the industrial plant and the development of new transport facilities. There are also opportunities in land reclamation, the expansion of public works, and other long-range programs. This country is an engineer's paradise, for we are the most mechanical-minded people in the world. They say that industry is the great talent of America, and I see nothing to be ashamed of in that. Engineers make the world easier to live in for everyone. Think of the great bridges and dams, the highways and airports. What would we do without them?

I like a life of action, and that is another reason why I plan to be an engineer. My father had a very interesting life in Mexico. After five years, there he went to Argentina. He had learned Spanish in Mexico and had made a name for himself there. So he got a good offer in Argentina. He sent my mother and me back to the United States until I grew up a little, but he came to see us at the end of the first year and took us back to Argentina with him. We lived there four years. Then he went to India and supervised the building of some bridges there. But he did not take us to India with him. He understood that the climate was too bad. And he was right, because he almost died there of dysentery. He never left America again, but his talk about his adventures gave me a desire for an active life, and he has never discouraged me.

I make my best marks in mathematics, which is the basis of engineering, and I think that a man should follow his best talent. I like other subjects, too — history, for instance, and I read a good many novels and stories. But I cannot see myself making a profession of any of these fields. Business would be too confining for me. I have an uncle who is a lawyer, and it seems to me that he never gets out of his office except to come home at night.

Taking everything together, I think that engineering is the right profession for me.

This theme has the unity of a true subject, but lacks the larger unity of good writing. When we examine the theme carefully, we can dig out the reasons for the student's choice of a career: family, the opportunity to make a good living, the appetite for action, and the aptitude for mathematics. These four reasons should give him the outline for his theme.

But he is constantly bringing in material which does not bear directly on the subject or which is developed without reference to the main line of interest. For instance, he is so much impressed with his father's life that he devotes far too much attention to it: most of the second and fourth paragraphs. For his purpose he needs to tell us only the barest facts about his father's career. The last part of the third paragraph, too, is not relevant. The writer may have two points here: that an engineer feels himself characteristically

American and that the engineer has the sense of being a useful member of society. But he does not state these points, and they are lost in his general remarks. If we get them at all, we get them by implication only. In the fifth paragraph, too, we find some irrelevant material: the reference to the writer's interest in history and fiction and the remark about his uncle's occupation. The writer has a main idea, but he does not stick to it.

### *Coherence*

An effective discourse must have unity. It must also have coherence; that is, the elements of the discourse must stick together. This last comment may seem to be simply another way of saying that a discourse must have unity. Indeed, the failure of the student theme just discussed might be stated as a failure in coherence quite as accurately as a failure in unity; we have in effect pointed out how one part does not lead to the next, how the writer fails to develop needed linkages, and how he has pointlessly introduced items that he does not need and that do not tie into anything else. Unity and coherence are indeed ultimately related; and yet it is worth making a distinction between them. That distinction may be stated thus: When we speak of unity, we refer primarily to the relation of the materials to the subject. When we speak of coherence, we refer primarily to the organization of the materials so as to give a continuous *development* to the subject. A discourse that lacks coherence will, of course, seem to lack unity; for even though the individual parts are actually related to the subject, the incoherent author will have failed to demonstrate how they relate to each other and that they thus make up *one* discourse.

### *Coherence through over-all organization*

There is no one principle by which the materials of a discourse are to be organized. Obviously, a principle of organization that is good for describing a woman's face would not be good for telling the story of a baseball game or a battle, or for arguing in favor of the abolition of Greek-letter fraternities, or for explaining the causes of the Russian Revolution. Different intentions demand different principles of organization. The basic intentions and some of the characteristic methods of organization, we shall study in subsequent chapters. Here we can content ourselves with the common-sense principle that one thing should lead to another.

Let us suppose that the student who wrote the essay entitled "Why I Wish To Be an Engineer" sets out to write another theme

and, in writing it, undertakes to pay special attention to the principles of unity and coherence. The topic "Interesting People" has been assigned to him, and, after some thought, he brings it down to a more limited and specific subject, something nearer to his special interests and experience and something nearer to a true subject. He decides to write about a member of the family that he knows intimately; his central idea will be to define his special admiration for that person. He will call his theme "The Person I Admire Most: Uncle Conroy."

But before starting to write the theme, the student does something else. He is determined to overcome his tendency to be scatter-brained; so he now jots down some of the points that he wants to make and tries to arrange them into a kind of sketch or outline. His outline looks something like this.

STATEMENT OF THE SUBJECT      Why I admire my Uncle Conroy

INTRODUCTION

I. My uncle as he now appears — apparent failure and real success

BODY

II. The background of my uncle's achievement

A. His worldly success and ruin

B. His illness and despair

III. The nature of my uncle's achievements

A. His practical achievements

1. Help with the children

2. Help with my father's business

3. Help with my mother's illness

B. His achievement in self-control

1. Naturalness of his actions

2. Cheerfulness in the face of pain

C. His greatest achievement, an example to others — the summary of his other achievements

CONCLUSION

IV. My uncle as a type of success and my admiration for him

The outline has narrowed the true subject to the uncle's success in life. The title of the theme thus could be, "Success and Uncle Conroy." Although the outline is relatively simple, it should be adequate for the subject. A student who has trouble in organizing his material may do well to consult the section on outlining, page 328.

Though not an end in itself, an outline is a help in the actual writing of a theme. It helps especially in solving the problem of unity and coherence, in indicating how the parts relate to the subject and hang together. An outline, however, need not be followed slavishly. In the process of writing, new thoughts may come, and

new material may be suggested. The writer should always be ready to take advantage of these. He may have to stop writing and go back to make a new outline, or he may be able to incorporate the new thoughts or new material directly into the body of the theme. In any event, it is a good idea to check the finished theme against the original outline and, if necessary, make a new outline.

Actually, the student did not follow his outline slavishly in writing his theme about Uncle Conroy. Some of the ways in which he departed from it we shall discuss a little later. But now let us look at his theme. (Note that he has taken some care to make the introduction engage our interest in what is to come.)

#### SUCCESS AND UNCLE CONROY

I suppose that my Uncle Conroy is the person I admire most in the world. This statement would probably seem strange to anyone who happened to visit our home and see the old man sitting hunched over and shabbily dressed at a corner of the hearth, not saying much. He looks like the complete failure, and by ordinary standards he is. He has no money. He has no children. He is old and sick. But he has made his own kind of success, and I think he is happy.

At one time in his life he was a success by ordinary standards. He was the son of a poor Methodist minister (my mother's father), but he ran away from home in Illinois to Oklahoma, back in the days when things were beginning to boom out there. He had a fine house in Oklahoma City, and a ranch. He was a hail fellow, well met, and men and women liked him. He was a sportsman, kept good horses, and took long hunting trips to Mexico and Canada. Then one day, on his own ranch, his horse stumbled in a gopher hole and threw him. He was badly hurt and was in the hospital for many months. While he was still in the hospital, the Depression came on. If he had been well and able to take care of his affairs, he might have saved some of his money from the crash. As it was, he lost everything. So he came back to Illinois, and my mother and father took him in.

It must have been an awful comedown for a man like that to be living on charity. But the worst was yet to happen, for he developed arthritis in a very painful form. I remember the first year or so, even though I was a very small child. He even tried to commit suicide with gas from the stove. But my mother saved him, and after that he began to change.

The first thing was that he began to take an interest in us children. He would read to us and talk to us. He helped us with our lessons. That relieved mother a great deal and made her life easier. My father was an insurance man and had a lot of paper work to do. It got so that my uncle took an interest in that, and before long he was helping my father by doing reports and writing letters. He helped my father tide

over the bad time of the Depression. Then when my mother was ill for a long time, he learned to do some of the housework, as much as his strength would permit, and even dressed the two smaller children.

What he did was important, but more important was the way he did things. He was so natural about it. You never got the impression he was making any effort or sacrifice. We all got so we didn't notice what he did, and I am sure that that was what he wanted.

As I look back now, or when I go home and see Uncle Conroy, the biggest achievement, however, seems to be the kind of example he gave us all. He was often in pain, but he was always cheerful. If he felt too bad, he simply hid away from the family for a while in his room — what he called his "mope-room." He even made a joke out of that. And he didn't act like a man who had failed. He acted like a man who had found what he could do and was a success at it. And I think that he is a success. We all admire success, and that is why I admire my Uncle Conroy.

This theme is coherent. We can see how each section of it fits into the general pattern. The main business of the writer is to tell why he admires his uncle, but he does not immediately set up the reasons. First, by way of introduction, he gives a brief sketch of the man as he now appears — the man who is to be interpreted. The appearance of failure in contrast to the reality of success gives dramatic interest and excites the reader's curiosity.

In the second paragraph the writer tells of his uncle's days of outward success. This topic does not get into the theme merely because the uncle, as a matter of fact, had such success. Many things that happened to him are certainly omitted here. Instead, it gets in because the taste of worldly success makes more impressive the uncle's achievement in being able to shift his values in the face of adversity.

The third paragraph presents the despair of the uncle — a normal response to bankruptcy and illness. This topic has a place in the general organization, for it states the thing that the uncle must fight against.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth paragraphs define the nature of the uncle's achievement. The order here is one of ascending importance, toward a climax — the special practical things he did, the attitude he took toward the doing, the long-range effect of his example on others. The sixth paragraph not only states the uncle's most important achievement but serves as a kind of summary of the preceding material.

## ■ Application

Compare the student's outline for "Success and Uncle Conroy" with the essay. Can you suggest any way of making this theme more unified and coherent? Does the student follow his outline exactly or does he vary from it?

### *Coherence through local transitions*

Thus far, we have been talking about what is involved in the over-all organization of a piece of writing. But the question of local transitions within the discourse is also extremely important. How do we get from one section to another, one paragraph to another, one sentence to another?

Obviously there must be an intrinsic continuity: What one section, paragraph, or sentence presents must bear some relation to the whole subject and to what has just preceded. But even when there is this intrinsic continuity, we may have to help the reader by using certain devices of connection and transition, by giving him links or signposts.

We can begin a section, paragraph, or sentence with some reference to what has gone before. The repetition or rephrasing of something in the preceding element will provide a link. For example, let us look at the link that ties together the first and second paragraphs of the theme:

. . . He is old and sick. But he has made *his own kind of success*, and I think he is happy.

At one time of his life he was *a success by ordinary standards*. He was. . . .

The repetition of the word *success* (which points up the antithesis between "his own kind" and that according to "ordinary standards") provides the link between the two paragraphs. But pronouns and other words of reference (such as *such*, *similar*, *that*, *these*, and so forth) may serve the same purpose. Notice, for example, how paragraphs 4 and 5 of the theme are linked.

. . . he *learned to do some of the housework* . . . and even *dressed* the two smaller children.

*What he did* was important, but more important was the way he did things. . . .

Furthermore, there are words (though in this theme none are used to connect paragraphs) the function of which is to indicate specific relations: conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs, and some ad

verbs. These words say what they mean. *And, or, nor* establish a coordinate connection. *But, however, nevertheless* establish a contrast. *So, therefore, consequently* establish a result. *Moreover* and *furthermore* indicate additions or elaborations. *First, second, next, last*, and so forth, indicate items in a series.

Another way to establish continuity is found in a large group of more or less conventional phrases. Such phrases are also self-explanatory: *in addition, as has been said, that is to say, that is, as a consequence, for example, for instance, as a result, on the contrary*.

None of these lists is complete. They are merely suggestive. But they may serve to indicate the function of such words and phrases so that the student can by his reading build up his own resources.

We must not use such transitional words and phrases unless they are necessary. They are not ornaments, and they impede the reader rather than help him if the sense is clear without them. Overuse of such expressions may, in fact, indicate a breakdown in the coherence of the composition.

### *Emphasis*

A piece of writing may be unified and coherent and still not be effective if it does not observe the principle of *emphasis*. When this principle is properly observed, the intended scale of importance of elements in the discourse is clear to the reader. All cats are black in the dark, but all things should not look alike in the light of a reasonable writer's interest in his subject. To change our metaphor, there is a foreground and a background of interest, and the writer should be careful to place each item in its proper location. Like unity and coherence, emphasis is a principle of organization.

#### *Emphasis by flat statement*

How do we emphasize an element in a piece of writing?

The first and most obvious way is for the writer to state quite flatly his own view on the importance of a matter. If we turn back to the theme "The Person I Admire Most," we find that paragraphs 4, 5, and 6 represent a scale of importance.

The first thing was that he began to take an interest in us children. . . .

What he did was important, but *more important* was the way he did things. . . .

As I look back now, or when I go home and see Uncle Conroy,



the *biggest achievement*, however, seems to be the kind of example he gave us all. . . .

In depending on his own statement for emphasis the writer should remember that the actual content must justify the statement. Before he makes the statement, he must think through the subject and be sure that he really believes in his own statement.

### *Emphasis by position*

A second way to emphasize is by position. "First or last" is a fairly sound rule for emphasis by position. This rule corresponds to two general methods for treating a subject. The main idea can be presented and then discussed or proved, or discussion or proof can lead up to the main idea. Ordinarily the second method is better, and the end is the most emphatic position, for the last impression on a reader is what counts most. But some rather conventionalized forms of writing, such as news stories, put the most important material first. In any case, the middle is the least emphatic position.

### *Emphasis by proportion*

Proportion in itself is a means of emphasis. The most important topic in a discussion reasonably receives fullest treatment. This principle, however, is more flexible than the preceding statement would indicate. In some writings the last and most important topic may have been so well prepared for by the foregoing discussion that it does not require elaborate treatment. The writer must decide each case on its own merits and be sure that he is not indulging in elaboration merely for the sake of elaboration.

### *Other devices of emphasis*

Flat statement, order of importance, proportion, and style (to be discussed in Chapter 12) are major means of expressing emphasis, but there are certain minor ones. For instance, repetition of an idea can give it prominence. The danger here is that the repetition may become merely mechanical and therefore dull. To be effective, repetition must be combined with some variety and some progression in the treatment of the subject. Then there is the device of the short, isolated paragraph. The idea set off by itself strikes the eye. But not all short paragraphs are in themselves emphatic. The content and the phrasing of the short paragraph must make it appear worthy of the special presentation. Obviously if many paragraphs are short, all emphasis disappears.

### *Faulty devices of emphasis*

Certain frequently occurring devices of emphasis are worse than useless. Irresponsible exaggeration always repels the reader. Catchwords and hackneyed phrases, such as *awfully*, *terribly*, *tremendously*, *the most wonderful thing I ever saw*, *you never saw anything like it*, *I can't begin to tell you*, make a claim on the reader's attention that he is rarely prepared to grant. Random underlining and italicizing and the use of capitals and exclamation points usually defeat their own purpose. Writers use these devices when they are not sure that what they have to say will stand on its own merits. To insist that what you have to say is important does not prove the point. As the writer, you must prove it.

In applying any of the means of emphasis the writer must first of all be sure that the thing emphasized is worth emphasizing. Common sense must help him here. Nothing else can.

### ■ **Applications**

- I Go back to the student theme "Why I Wish To Be an Engineer" and criticize it for coherence and emphasis.
- II You will now write your first theme, a theme of 750 words or more about yourself. Remember that you have a particular audience, the instructor. That person is almost a stranger to you, but he is friendly and interested. He wants to know you better. For one thing, he wants to know the basic facts of your life. These facts are bound to be part of your story. But he wants to know a good deal more, something of the inside "you," your character, your training, your ambitions, your view of yourself.

But "yourself" is a big topic. Begin by thinking about it, by exploring it. Try to answer honestly, in your own mind, such questions as the following:

- 1 What kind of family do I have?
- 2 What kind of intellectual and moral training have I received?
- 3 What people have had the greatest influence on me?
- 4 Has that influence been for good or bad?
- 5 What important experiences have I had? Why were they important to me?
- 6 What have I done that I am most proud of?
- 7 Have I made the most of my opportunities?

- 8 What is my own character like?
- 9 What do I enjoy most?
- 10 What do I dislike most?
- 11 Did I get good training in high school?
- 12 Why did I come to college?
- 13 What is my ambition?
- 14 What is my best talent? How does it relate to the career I plan?
- 15 What other questions should I answer to arrive at some estimate of myself?

You now have a large body of material laid out for your theme. You will not be able to use it all. But the attempt to answer these questions about yourself may give you some perspective on yourself, the lead to some line of interest which will serve as the central idea of your theme and the spine for its organization. Or at least you may now see how various facts and ideas may be connected.

In trying to see how you can relate various facts and ideas, you may find certain further general questions helpful. For instance

- 1 To what extent have circumstances (heredity, family situation, certain persons, and experience) made me what I am?
- 2 To what extent do I feel myself responsible for what I am?
- 3 How do I assess myself and my possibilities at this moment?

Having pondered these questions, you may come up with such thematic statements as "I am of a decayed New England stock," "My grandparents arrived in America stony broke," "I have to live down my father's fame," or "I am that monster, the completely *average* person." Or perhaps the three questions produce nothing that is helpful. In that case, you may be able to frame others much more important and fruitful for your purposes.

Below you will find a student's theme in autobiography. Although you should not take it as a model, it may give you some useful ideas. Note, first, that the student assumes a sympathetic and interested reader, as for such a theme he has a right to do. In his introduction he says that he has a single main idea for his theme. He does not tell what it is, though he might very well have done so, but prefers to move toward it through a piece of narrative. Note, too, how many details of the writer's life get into the theme, even though it is all

directed toward a main idea. Do you feel that you have a fairly good notion of his character? Do you feel that you understand the father's character? Note how the theme concludes. How does the writer gain emphasis? He does make a straight statement of what he has learned, but he does not say straight out how this learning came from the experiences of the past. Does he need to? Can you frame a statement that shows how what he learned came from his experience?

Here is the theme itself

#### LEARNING THE HARD WAY

I don't know how I could tell all about myself, but at least I can tell what seems to me now the most important thing I have yet learned about myself. To tell it I shall have to tell what led up to my learning it.

My home is in Illinois, in the southern part of the state that is known as Egypt. My family lives on a farm (it is good farming country), but my father practices law in —, which is a county seat. My mother has been dead some years and we have a housekeeper to run our household. The county high school where I went is not very good and since my father used to help me a lot with my studies, I made a fine scholastic record and had time to spare for the basketball team and plenty of fun. I thought I was pretty good, if I must confess the truth. Then if I had had any lingering doubts about my abilities, they were demolished when I got a scholarship to go East to — Hall, which is a good prep school. I was ready to conquer the world, single handed.

It didn't work out quite that way. The boys at — Hall had had much better training than I had and were used to tougher competition. They could breeze through lessons that broke my back. Besides, I hadn't realized before how much I had relied on my father's help at home. He was always around if I got stuck with Cicero or solid geometry. I hadn't realized either how much I had depended on getting a pat on the head from those old maid school teachers at County High or on getting a cheer when I sneaked a fast one into the basket in the last two minutes of play on the basketball court.

Now things were different, and I simply could not bear the thought of defeat. Yet it looked as though that was what I was in for. To make matters worse, I was now up against boys with plenty of money, who took trips to Europe and Canada and had expensive hobbies. I had never thought about such things before. Now I began to get self-conscious about my lack of money and this did not help my work. And I didn't make the basketball team. I didn't even make substitute. I had miserable grades in January and was on the verge of being busted out.

I don't know why my father came to see me. He told me that he

had had to go on to New York City on a business trip, but now I suppose that he was lying. Perhaps one of the teachers had written him. He did not hang around the school much after he had met my teachers and seen the place and eaten one meal in the big hall. After dinner that night I broke down and showed him my marks. He looked at them and just burst out laughing. "Heck, son," he said, "that's just fine. I wish they were worse!"

I must have looked surprised. He laughed again and slapped me on the shoulder. "You sure thought you were a rooster, didn't you?" he said. I grinned in what must have been a sickly way.

Then he said for me to forget it. He said we were going to pack up and go to the city and paint the town. I cut classes for two days. We had a fine time, going to shows and seeing the sights. When he put me on the train to go back to school, he said, as he shook hands good-by: "You know, Jack, maybe you are as much of a rooster as any guy ought to be." He left me with that to chew on.

I don't mean to suggest that I went back to — Hall and conquered the world the rest of the year. But things were different. I slept and ate better, and studies seemed to come easier. I began to make some friends and went home with one of the guys for Easter. In the spring I had a good deal of tennis and began to improve my game, for there is a good coach at — Hall. I passed my work. I wasn't sensational, but I made it under the wire for college. And now that I'm here, I think I know better how to go about things than if I had come a year ago. I know better how to depend on myself and roll with the punch. And I know that it is the last punch that counts.

Take some leading idea about yourself for your true subject (see pages 10-11 and 17-18) and try to relate all details to that. To do so will give you some control over your material. Furthermore, to gain more control after you have settled on the leading idea, make an outline for your projected theme. But do not feel bound by the outline. When you actually begin composition, keep an open mind. If new ideas come, as they almost certainly will, think them over on their merits, even if this means a change in your plan.

After you have finished the first draft of your theme, check it against the outline. If the theme seems good and systematic but does not match the outline, revise the outline to conform to the theme. But if the theme does not seem satisfactory and the outline does, revise the theme to conform to the outline. Attach the outline to the theme before you hand it in.

741

## Chapter Four

### The Main Intention

We have discussed briefly the basic parts of any piece of composition: the introduction, the body of the work, and the conclusion; and we have discussed the three interrelated principles that undergird even the humblest piece of writing: unity, coherence, and emphasis. But up to this point we have not discussed the writer's main intention, as such, and the ways in which it determines the kind of writing that he does.

Looking back on the three themes given thus far, we can see that one student meant to make plain to us why he wanted to be an engineer, another to explain why his Uncle Conroy was the person whom he most admired, and another to present a significant event in his own life. But each writer has told something of the story of his own life; each has set forth explanations, has tried to make something clear to us; each has used directly, or has implied, an argument, that is, has given reasons for taking a certain view or a certain action; and each has attempted to describe, more or less fully, certain people or scenes. That is, within these themes we can distinguish four kinds of intention.

#### *The four kinds of discourse*

The four kinds of intention correspond to the four basic kinds of discourse: *exposition*, *argument*, *description*, and *narration*.

In the first of these, exposition, the intention is to explain something, to make clear to the reader some idea, to analyze a character or situation, to define a term, to give directions. The intention, in short, is to inform.

In argument, the intention is to make somebody change his

mind, his attitude, his point of view, or his feelings. Whatever change is aimed at is to be achieved primarily by an appeal to the powers of logic.

In description, the intention is to make the reader sense something as vividly as the writer himself has sensed it (or imagined it), to make him get the feel of the thing described, the quality of a direct experience. The thing described may be anything which we can grasp through the senses, a natural scene, a city street, a cat or a race horse, the face of a person, the sound of a voice, the texture of bark, the odor of an attic, a piece of music.

In narration, the intention is to present an event to the reader — what happened and how it happened. The event itself may be grand or trivial, a battle or a ball game, a presidential campaign or a picnic; but whatever it is, the intention of the writer is to give the impression of movement in time, to give some immediate impression of the event, the sense of witnessing it.

### *Mixture of the kinds of discourse and the main intention*

We have just listed the four kinds of discourse as traditionally described in their pure form. But we do not, of course, regularly encounter them in a pure form. We began this discussion, in fact, by pointing out that the kinds of discourse were mixed in the student themes we had been examining. In more elaborate pieces of writing the forms may be even more intricately intertwined. A magazine article on international affairs may very well employ narrative, as in an illustrative anecdote, or description, as in presenting the statesmen on whose decision the settlement of affairs may rest. Argument and exposition may be intertwined in a most complicated fashion. For example, the writer must make clear to the reader an existing state of affairs and thus will use exposition; but the writer may also have in mind some conviction that he wishes to pass on to his reader, some course of action that he wishes to recommend, and will therefore use argument.

At this point the student may well ask: "What becomes of the notion of a kind of discourse as the main intention if the kinds are so mixed up in ordinary practice?" This is a reasonable question, and the answer to it is fundamental. *In a good piece of writing the mixing of the kinds of discourse is never irresponsible. There is always a main intention, a fundamental purpose.* The class report will always be, by its very nature, a piece of exposition. The novel, no matter how much exposition, description, or argument it may contain, will always be primarily an example of narration. Certain

instances may not be as clear-cut as these. Our example of the magazine article on international affairs may be primarily expository, with argument as a sort of aside, or it may aim, in the end, to convince the reader of the desirability of a certain policy and thus be primarily an argument. But always, in any piece of writing, the writer should know what his main intention is, whether he wants chiefly to explain, persuade, describe, or narrate.

Though most writing does involve a mixture of the kinds of discourse, we can best study them in isolation, one by one, as we shall do in the four succeeding chapters. This method of study will mean the systematic analysis of relatively pure examples in order to observe the types of organization appropriate to any one kind. It is only after one understands the kinds of discourse in pure form that one can make them work together in unity in a larger composition.

### ■ *Application*

Read the following passages: the account of the duel from "The Life of Andrew Jackson" (page 202), "I Don't Like the System of Required Courses" (page 120), and "For Whom the Bell Tolls" (page 182). Each is primarily one type of discourse. What is it? What other types do you find in each one?





***Part Two***  
***The Forms of Discourse***

## Chapter Five

### The Methods of Exposition

(Exposition is the kind of discourse that explains or clarifies a subject.) The word *exposition* quite literally means to set forth a subject. It appeals to the understanding. Argument also appeals to the understanding, but it does so, not to explain something, but to convince the reader of the truth or desirability of something. Description and narration may, of course, lead to understanding, but their special appeal is to the imagination, to the reader's capacity for recreating in his mind the immediate qualities of an object or event.)

Exposition is the most common kind of writing, for it is applicable to any task that challenges the understanding — the definition of a word, the way to a street address, the structure of a plant, the mechanism of a watch, the meaning of a historical event, the motive of an act, the meaning of a philosophy.

Exposition thus challenges the understanding, and when we study the methods of exposition, we are studying some of the ways in which our minds work, some of the ways in which we observe and reason about things. We need to think things through, to try to understand them. We need to try to communicate with people, to make ourselves understood, in either speech or writing, and to try to understand what other people say or write. Now, as we study exposition, we are simply doing something systematically which ordinary living, in its hit-or-miss, unsystematic way, has been forcing on us, quite naturally, all the time.

## (Interest

(A piece of exposition may be regarded as the answer to a question. If a specific question has been asked — “Why are you majoring in chemistry?” or “What were the causes of the American Revolution?” — it is rather easy to frame an answer that does not waver too badly from the point. But if we set out to write a piece of exposition simply because we feel that a subject is engrossing or important, we are very likely to give a confused account. Our vague feeling will not be enough to guide us. We must decide what specific question is our concern. We must decide this, because the question embodies the *interest* that the subject holds for us and that we want to appeal to in our readers.

An informal list may suggest the kinds of interest to which exposition appeals:

1. What is it?
2. What does it mean?
3. How is it put together?
4. How does it work?
5. What was it intended for?
6. How did it come to be this way?
7. When did it occur or exist?
8. What is it worth?
9. What is its importance?
10. How well does it fulfill its intended function?

We may ask other questions, of course, about a subject, but these are among the most usual.

Naturally, not all of these questions would be appropriate for the same subject.) If we are trying to explain the nature of a triangle, we would scarcely ask when it occurred, since the nature of a triangle — what makes a figure a triangle and not something else — has no reference to time at all. Or if we are discussing a railroad wreck, we would scarcely ask how well it fulfilled its intended function. It would be appropriate, however, to ask about its causes.

(In Chapter 2, we discussed the problem of locating the real subject in a general topic, the concern that gives unity to a composition. ✓ The problem here is the same. The interest we wish to appeal to determines the line we follow in our discussion and gives that discussion its unity.)

Let us take an example. A student is interested in American history, particularly of the pioneer era. He decides to write a theme on Daniel Boone. Obviously the entire life of Daniel Boone is too

broad a subject for a student theme, and so he must narrow his focus. Turning to the above list, he runs over each of the questions, applying each to his general topic of interest. Our student chose "What is its (his) importance?" and set out to develop his theme around this specific interest.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF DANIEL BOONE

1. From the title we know that the main interest is the importance of Boone, but in this paragraph the interest lies in the question "*What is importance — being or doing?*" In other words, this is an example of our first question in the list.

2. Here the author discusses the first of the two kinds of importance of Boone as a man who accomplished things: opening the land.

3. Here he discusses the second example of the importance of accomplishment.

If someone had asked me when I was twelve years old what was the importance of Daniel Boone, I would have thought that person was crazy. I would have said,

"Any idiot can see he is important just because he is Daniel Boone!" I had read a lot of boys' books about my hero, and one or two adult books, too, and I thought that being able to live in the woods alone and not be lonesome, or being able to know all the animals so well and their ways, or being able to endure hardship were the finest qualities a man could have. But now I am told that what counts is not just being something but accomplishing something. So I have to ask myself what Daniel Boone accomplished.

One of the books I have read about Boone makes the point that to understand his importance you must understand the life of the border settlements, how the people were land hungry and had the urge to push on and better themselves. Boone, more than anybody else, opened up the new country to them. He gave them a place to go. It is true that he was hired as a sort of guide by the big rich land speculators who had bought a chunk of Kentucky from the Indians. Some credit is also due those men even if their motive was just to make money. But it was Boone who took the personal risk, and it was to Boone that the settlers looked for guidance.

The other important thing Boone did was to lead the settlers against the Indians at the time of the Revolution. The British were using the Indians against the settlers, and if the Indians had managed to win

a victory in Kentucky, they might have gone on and caused real damage farther east and hurt seriously the cause of American Independence. It was Boone who inspired the settlers in Kentucky to fight and who showed them how. In that way he made a real contribution to our independence.

4. The author here discusses the question: "*What was it intended for?*" He applies it, of course, to Boone's accomplishment.

We can't say that Daniel Boone intended to accomplish these things. When he started out, all he wanted was to get a big land grant from the company he worked for, the Transylvania Company, and it was only bad luck and not knowing how to stake claims that prevented him. And when the country was settled, he moved on to Missouri, which was then part of Spanish territory. That action may not seem very patriotic, even taking into account the facts that he had gone broke in Kentucky and that nobody appreciated him. Also he felt cramped as Kentucky became settled and the game thinned out. You might say he was thinking more about good hunting than about helping the country.

5. In this paragraph the author gives a summary of the two kinds of important accomplishments of Boone, but he also goes back to the question: "*What is importance anyway?*"

But he did help the country anyway, in the two things he accomplished, whether he intended to or not — opening the land and helping to achieve independence. Those things are enough, in my mind, to make anybody a hero. There is one question, however, I would like to ask. Don't we remember Boone more for what he was than for what he accomplished? I can't help thinking more about him just walking through the wilderness by himself and being perfectly at home than I do about his accomplishments. It makes me feel happy and free just to think of him that way. To give that feeling may be a kind of importance, too.

As we see, our student has appealed to several interests in the course of his theme. Our marginal notes indicate the kinds of interest appealed to in the different paragraphs. We can see by the notes, too, how one interest leads to another. To summarize:

1. If the author is to discuss the importance of Boone, he must settle what importance is — *being* or *doing*. He accepts the common notion of *doing*.
2. Now, in two paragraphs he gives examples of what Boone accomplished, what he *did* for the country.
3. In the fourth paragraph he admits that Boone did not originally *intend* these accomplishments for the good of the country, but he says that the accomplishments are there anyway. (As a matter of fact, this last statement is in the fifth paragraph; the writer should have put it back into the fourth paragraph, for it is the end of his discussion of Boone's intention.)
4. In the last paragraph, the author comes back to the importance of Boone as a certain kind of individual. He won't give up that idea and tries to explain why. We are back to our first interest, but with a different answer to the question.

In other words, we have a large, main interest: "What is it?" — "What is the importance of Daniel Boone?" Then we have another, smaller interest in the first paragraph, again, "What is it?" — "What constitutes importance?" Then we have two examples of importance, answers to the question: "What did he do?" Then we have the answer to the question: "What was intended?" In the last paragraph, we go back to the first interest: "What constitutes importance?" But the whole essay has centered around the importance of Boone.

## ■ Applications

- I Below is a list of general subjects. Select three that interest you, and for each state five interests that might be used as true subjects. For instance, the general subject "Jet Propulsion" might provide several true subjects: (1) the history of its development, (2) the engineering principles involved, (3) the comparison of jet propulsion with other methods of propulsion, (4) the effect of jet planes on tactics in air warfare, (5) the effect on military strategy, (6) the effect on design of aircraft.

Baseball

The Eighteenth Amendment

Capital punishment

Socialism

The potato

Marriage

The horse

My church

Jazz

Photography

The Battle of Gettysburg  
Military discipline  
Nationalism  
Charity

Walt Whitman  
Symphonic music  
Saint Paul  
Going steady

- II Take one of the lists of true subjects you have prepared and try to develop several interests which might be related to one another in a discussion. Return to the section on outlining in Chapter 3 (and if your instructor suggests it, to the section on outlining, Chapter 13, page 328), and prepare a topic outline of the discussion.

### *The methods of exposition*

We shall now study the methods of exposition: identification, definition, comparison and contrast, illustration, classification, process analysis, and causal analysis. These are the ways in which we go about answering questions that demand exposition. This statement does not mean that there is a method to correspond to each question on our list. Some methods may be used in answering more than one question, and the answer to a single question may sometimes be made by a combination of methods.

Any discourse — for example, an editorial, an essay, a theme, a chapter in a textbook — will probably use more than one expository method. As a matter of fact, we rarely find a method in its pure state. But here, where we are trying to understand the nature of each method, we shall be concerned with relatively pure examples.

## THE FIRST METHOD: IDENTIFICATION

(*Identification*, one of the simplest methods of exposition, is a way of answering the question: "What is it?" It is a kind of pointing by means of language. "Who is Mrs. Bertrand Smith?" somebody asks, and the answer is, "Oh, she is the blond woman in the black dress, sitting to the right of the white-haired old man.") The reply has in effect pointed a finger at Mrs. Smith. But perhaps Mrs. Smith is not there to be pointed at so easily. So the answer may be "She is the woman who won the city golf tournament last year and then married the son of old Jason Smith, the banker." (In either case (the answer places the subject, Mrs. Smith, in such a context that she can be identified.)

We constantly use such casual forms of identification in conversation. But we can use the same method in writing. For example



we can begin an article on the Carmel Mission by writing: "The Carmel Mission stands just outside the village of Monterey, California. It was founded by Padre Junipero Serra, who had come up from San Diego in the year 1770." We have thus identified the subject.

(If identification becomes elaborate, it tends to move into other expository methods; it begins, for example, to overlap with definition or to use analysis, comparison, or contrast: and it may become lost in other more interesting methods. Even so, the method of identification is a useful and simple way of locating, of placing, of making possible the recognition of a subject.)

## THE SECOND METHOD: DEFINITION

(Like identification, *definition* tries to answer the question: "What is it?" Before we can well discuss how a definition is made, however, we must settle on what the *it* is that is being defined. Strictly speaking, we can say that a definition is not of a thing but of a word. If we define *cat*, we are telling how to use the word *cat*. A definition sets the limits or bounds within which a term can be used,) as the derivation of the word *definition* implies (it comes from two Latin words: *de*, meaning "with relation to," and *finis*, meaning "limit"). This idea of definition as the limiting of a word is illustrated by the demand, which we are likely to make during an argument: "Define your terms." We do not usually make this demand about a word such as *cat*, but we frequently require a definition of a word such as *democracy*, *religion*, *honesty*, or *goodness*, which has several possible — and often slippery — meanings. We have the right to know how such a term is being used, and so we ask for the definition. (By *term* we mean any word, or group of words, that constitutes a unit of meaning, that refers to one thing or idea.)

(The process of making a definition is not a mere game of words. It is clear that we cannot make a useful definition without knowledge of the thing (that is, the object, event, idea) to which the term refers. So the process of making a definition involves knowledge, and it may not only enlarge the understanding of the person who receives the definition but, more importantly, may even lead the maker of the definition to clarify his own thoughts on the subject involved.)

### *Parts of a definition: convertibility*

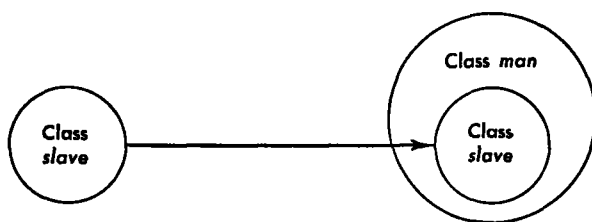
(A definition is an equation. If we are asked to define term *A*, ✓ we say, "*A* is *B*" — or is *X*, *Y*, or *Z*. The equation has two terms, the *to-be-defined* and the *definer*, which quite literally equal each other. That is, in any statement you can substitute one term for the other without changing the sense of the statement in any respect. The terms are *convertible*.)

For example, let us define *slave* as a human being who is the legal property of another and then set up this definition as an equation:

Slave                      is   human being who is legal property of another  
The *to-be-defined*    =   the *definer*

If we make a statement using the word which is the *to-be-defined*, we may substitute the *definer* for that word without any change of sense. The statement "To be a slave is worse than death" has exactly the same meaning as the statement "To be (a human being who is) the legal property of another is worse than death." To repeat, the terms are convertible.

Let us take another statement: "A slave is a man." This statement — this *proposition*, to use the technical term — is clearly true. But is it a definition? Let us consider the question by thinking of two classes, or groups — the class *slave* and the class *man*. The class *man* is, clearly, a bigger group than the class *slave*; that is, there are men who are not slaves. Our original proposition, "A slave is a man," is true because the big class *man* includes the smaller class *slave*.

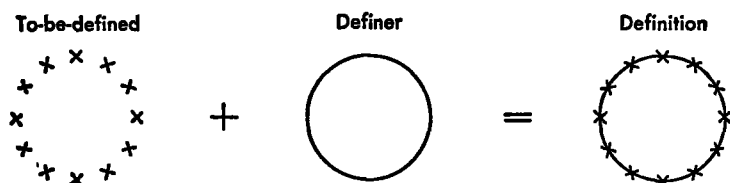


It is obvious that any statement we make about man as a class (that is, any statement that is true of *all* men) will necessarily be true of slaves, for the class *slave* is included in the class *man*. But no statement about slaves is *necessarily* true of all men. It *may* be true, as when we say, "Slaves have two legs." But there are many reasonable statements about slaves, such as our statement above, "To be a slave is worse than death," which are not applicable to all men (for we can scarcely substitute *man* for *slave* in our last statement

and say, "To be a man is worse than death"). In other words, our proposition, "A slave is a man," does not have convertible terms. The *definer* is larger than the *to-be-defined* and includes it. Therefore the statement, even though true, is not a definition.

We can also go wrong in the other direction. We can have a *definer* that is smaller than the *to-be-defined*. We make that error, for instance, if we say that a table is a piece of furniture on which we serve meals. The *definer* ("a piece of furniture on which we serve meals") is too small, because it will not cover many kinds of tables — study tables, bedside tables, sewing tables, etc.

To sum up, (the *to-be-defined* and the *definer* must, if we think of them graphically as one superimposed on the other, be the same size; they must be coterminous.)



### ■ Application

Some of the following statements are correct definitions, and some are not; that is, some are real equations, and some are not. Distinguish those that are correct, and explain why. If you lack the information necessary to judge some of the definitions, use a dictionary or some other reference book, such as an encyclopedia. For example, statement 11 uses the word *anthropology*. If you do not know what anthropology is, try to find out. If anthropology studies more than morality, then statement 11 is not a correct definition.

- 1 The French word *cheval* means horse.
- 2 A collar is the thing a man wears around his neck.
- 3 A protuberance is a thing that protrudes.
- 4 A man is a featherless biped.
- 5 A collie is the Scotch shepherd dog.
- 6 A collie is a long-haired dog.
- 7 A hero is a man who is useful to society.
- 8 Interment is the act or ceremony of putting a dead body in the earth.
- 9 Patriotism is a holy sentiment.
- 10 Patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel.

- 11 The science of anthropology is the science which studies morality.
- 12 Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
- 13 A *soirée* means a social function which does not take place in the afternoon.

### *Process of definition*

(Identification answers the question: "What is it?" by pointing to its subject in space and time. Definition, too, is a kind of pointing, but it locates its subject, not in space and time, but according to another kind of scheme. A definition indicates the class into which a thing may be put and then points out how it differs from other things in that general class. The process of definition is not arbitrary; it is the natural way the mind works.) We make definitions constantly, without thinking about how we make them. Let us examine a very simple example of this natural process.

A small child who has never seen a cat receives one as a pet. The father tells the child that the animal is a cat — a kitty. The proud parent now assumes that the child knows what the word *cat* means, but he may be surprised one day to find the child pointing to a Pekingese and calling, "Kitty, kitty." It is obvious that the child is using the word to mean any small, furry animal. When the father takes him to the park, the child is very likely to call a squirrel a kitty, too.

The father now undertakes to give the child a definition of *cat*. To do so, he must instruct the child in the differences between a cat, a Pekingese, and a squirrel. In other words, he undertakes to break up the class, or group, that the child has made (all small, furry animals) into certain subgroups (cats, Pekingese, squirrels) by focusing attention upon the differences.

If the child understands his father, he can then give a questioner a definition of the word *cat* — an inadequate definition, of course, but nevertheless a definition:

QUESTIONER What does *cat* mean?

CHILD It's a little animal, and it's got fur.

QUESTIONER But dogs have fur, too, and dogs aren't cats.

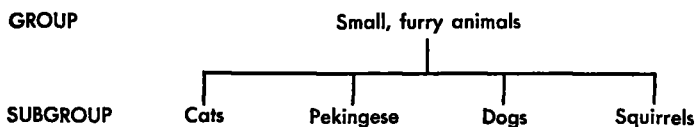
CHILD Yes, but dogs bark. Cats don't bark. Cats meow. And cats climb trees.

QUESTIONER But squirrels have fur, and they climb trees and are little.

CHILD Yes, but squirrels don't just *climb* trees like cats. They live in trees. And they don't meow like cats.

The child has put *cat* into a class, or group (small, furry animals), and then has distinguished the subgroup of cats from the other subgroups, Pekingese and squirrels.

If we chart the child's reasoning, we get a diagram like this:



✓ (Whenever we make a definition, <sup>on it</sup> we go through the same process as the child trying to tell what a kitty is. We locate the *to-be-defined* as a *species* in relation to a group (*genus*) that includes several different species and then try to say what quality or qualities (*differentia* or *differentiae*) distinguish the *to-be-defined* from the other species in the genus. So we get the formula:

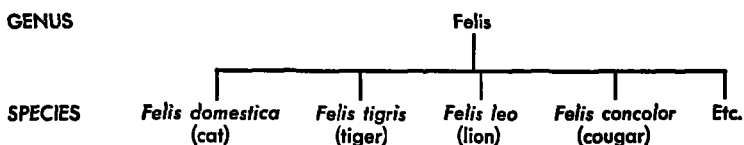
Definition of species	=	<i>genus</i> + <i>differentiae</i>
The <i>to-be-defined</i>	=	the <i>definer</i>

The pattern of the child's attempt to define *cat* is the usual pattern of definition, but the definition that the child gives will not serve us in our adult world. It will not serve us, because the genus and differentiae which the child adopts are not significantly distinguished. For instance, smallness and furriness are not traits that significantly mark off a genus, and meowing and climbing trees are not traits that significantly mark off the species *cat* from the other subgroups adopted by the child.

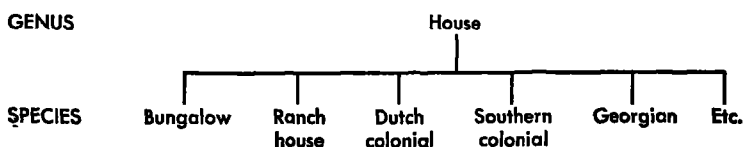
A zoologist would go about the business very differently. He might begin by saying: "A cat — *Felis domestica*, we call it — is a digitigrade, carnivorous mammal of the genus *Felis*, which includes the species tiger (*Felis tigris*), the species ocelot (*Felis pardalis*), the species lion (*Felis leo*), the species cougar (*Felis concolor*), and several other species. All the species of the genus *Felis* have lithe, graceful, long bodies, relatively short legs, with soft, padded feet, strong claws, which are retracted into sheaths when not in use, powerful jaws with sharp teeth, and soft, beautifully marked fur. The cat is the smallest of the genus, usually measuring so-and-so. It is the only species easily domesticated. . . ."

Like the child, the zoologist has set up a group, which he calls a *genus*, and has given the characteristics of the group. Then he has broken up the group into several subgroups, each of which he calls a *species*. Last, he has set about pointing out the differences between the species *cat* and the other species of the same genus.

Diagramed, his thinking has this form:



The form used by the zoologist is, we see, the same as that used by the child. The difference is that the zoologist thinks in *significant* classes. We should note that the zoologist uses the words *genus* and *species* with somewhat different meanings from ours. For him the word *genus* means not only a group including smaller groups called species, but also a group of species closely related structurally and by origin; and the word *species* means a subgroup whose members possess numerous characteristics in common and interbreed to preserve those characteristics. In other words, the zoologist has a specialized significance for the words *genus* and *species*, a significance dictated by the materials he is dealing with — living forms. When we make a definition, we do not use the specialized significance of the zoologist, but our classes must be significant for the purpose in hand. Let us examine the formal scheme for the definition of *bungalow*:



Though genus and species are part of all definition, we do not ordinarily use technical language in giving a definition. For *bungalow* we are apt to say: "Oh, it's a kind of house. It differs from Dutch colonial, Southern colonial, Georgian, and some other styles in that it has only one story. The best way to distinguish the bungalow from other one-story houses is by the floor plan. For instance, if we compare it with a ranch house, we find . . . etc."

### ■ Application.

From the following group of statements sort out those that are equations. Then take each equation and set it up in the formal pattern of the *to-be-defined* equaling *genus plus differ-*

*entiae*. For example, the statement "A triangle is a three-sided geometrical figure" would be analyzed as follows:

The <i>to-be-defined</i>	=	<i>genus + differentiae</i>
Triangle	=	geometrical figure + three-sided

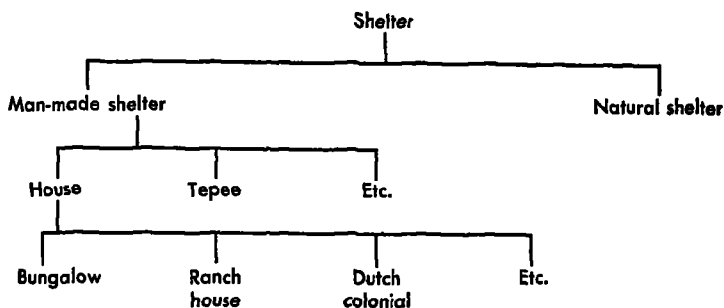
Do you find any that you cannot fit into this pattern? Note that you are not asked whether you accept a statement as true. You are asked whether, given the statement, you can convert the parts.

- 1 Molybdenum is a metallic element belonging to the chromium group, whitish in color, and resembling iron in its malleability and difficult fusibility.
- 2 Beauty is truth, truth beauty.
- 3 A line is what is described by a moving point.
- 4 A straight line is the shortest path between two points.
- 5 To be good is to be happy.
- 6 Nationalism means to love your country.
- 7 Nationalism is that attitude which would put the aggrandizement of country above all other considerations whatsoever.
- 8 Propaganda is an effort to dominate public opinion.
- 9 Advertising is an effort to dominate public opinion.
- 10 Propaganda is the corruption of the judgment of the public.
- 11 Advertising is a means of public service.
- 12 To be cultured is to love music, art, and poetry.

### *Definition and the common ground*

Suppose, language and history permitting, that we should try to give our definition of a bungalow to an American Indian of the old days. He probably would not let us get beyond the first sentence, "Oh, it's a kind of house," for he would immediately want to know what a house is. In other words, if we give a definition, we assume that our audience knows the genus we are going to work in. If the audience does not know the genus, we must go back to a more inclusive group, a group including our genus as a subgroup, and try again, hoping now to have a common ground. So, if our Indian does not understand what a house is, we may try again and begin by saying, "It's a kind of shelter — but a shelter you make, etc." Our Indian knows what a shelter is, and he can get a notion of man-made shelter, for he has a tepee or lodge or hogan.

What we have developed by implication is a scheme something like this:



The Indian has pushed us back a couple of stages, and we now have a common ground and can define *house* — and perhaps *bungalow* — if the Indian can understand our necessary differentiae under the now-established genus *house*.

Not only for our poor Indian but (for everyone, a common ground ✓ is necessary for an effective definition. This principle of the common ground is very important, for it implies that a definition is not only of *some term* but is for *somebody*. The giver of the definition can define only by reference to what his particular audience already knows or is willing to learn for the purpose at hand.

This necessary knowledge must be of two kinds: of words and of things. It must be of words, for a definition is in words. The giver of the definition must use words that his audience can understand or can readily become acquainted with.) For instance, when the zoologist refers to the cat as a "digitigrade mammal," and so on, he is using words that most of us would not know. For the general reader, the zoologist would need to explain further that *digitigrade* means "walking on the toes," as a cat does, as opposed to "walking on the whole foot" (*plantigrade*), as a man does. In this way the zoologist would provide the common ground.

(The knowledge must also be of things, for if the audience does ✓ not know the things a definition refers to, the definition will not work. For instance, there is no use in trying to define the color beige to a man blind from birth.) If you say that beige is a light, brownish color, the natural color of wool, you have really said nothing to him, for he has had no experience of color. If you go on and give the physicist's definition of color, referring to wave lengths of light, you run into the same difficulty. He can grasp the notion of wave length, but he has no basis for knowing what light is. You run into a defect in his experience, in his knowledge. (There is al- ✓



ways the possibility of running into some defects in our audience's knowledge, and, in so far as possible, we must work with what is known.)

### ***A caution: circular definition***

(We cannot define a thing by itself. If, for example, we define the word *statistician* by saying that it means anybody who makes a profession of compiling and studying statistics, we have committed the error of circular definition. The real question: "What kind of thing does a statistician do?" has been left unanswered. The pretended definition does not enlarge anybody's knowledge, because it merely repeats the term to be defined: *statistics, statistician*. It is also possible to make the error of *circular definition* without repeating a word, but merely by repeating an idea, as, "The causes of war are the several factors which result in armed conflict.")

### ■ ***Application***

Define each of the words in the following list, indicating in your definition the genus and differentiae. For example: *river* — a large, constantly flowing (differentiae) stream (genus). By our statement we have indicated that the species *river* belongs to the genus *stream* but is differentiated from other streams (brooks, rills, branches, runs, and creeks) by its size. Some of the problems will, however, be more complicated than this. If you do not have enough information to make a definition that satisfies you, use a dictionary or some reference work, such as an encyclopedia. Do not hesitate to copy a definition from a dictionary. But if you do, indicate the genus and differentiae in the dictionary definition. Perhaps even the dictionary will not help much with a word like *democracy*. You may feel that the dictionary definition does not express what you think to be the really important qualities of the word. In that case, do not hesitate to risk your own judgment.

pond	battalion	liberty	experiment
house	personality	tennis	yellow
lassitude	noun	fence	charity
anger	corporal	essay	automobile
horse	color	democracy	conscience
psychiatrist	depth	capitalism	book
morality	love		

### *Extended definition*

(While words like *house* or *pond* may be defined rather easily, other words — for instance, *morality*, *liberty*, or *conscience* — may lead us into very complicated discussions (as you have probably discovered). A simple definition will not serve. We need to extend our definition and try to think through the meaning (or, more likely, the meanings) of the term. Often such a definition requires an essay, or even a book.)

The attempt to define *wealth* given below is not a full essay, but it is considerably more extended than any definition we have yet encountered.

There is a certain desirable thing which is and must be the subject of political economy. Whether avowed or not, a definite conception is, in reality, under discussion in every treatise on this science. For this conception the term *wealth*, if used in accordance with history and etymology, is an accurate designation. The Saxon *weal* indicated a condition of relative well being, the state of having one's wants well supplied as compared with a prevailing standard. No possession common to all men can constitute such relative well being. The limitless gifts of nature do not produce it, since they are indiscriminate in their ministrations, air and sunlight make no differences among men and, though creating absolute well being, cannot create that social condition indicated by the term *wealth*. This relative condition can be produced only by that which, besides satisfying wants, is capable of appropriation.

It is by a transfer of meaning that the term which primarily designated a condition of life has been applied to the things which produce the condition. But not all causes of comparative happiness are included in the meaning of the word *Wealth*, as historically used, signified the well being resulting from outward rather than inward causes. Health and contentment may make a shepherd happier than the owner of flocks, yet the owner only is "well off." Reserving a broader term to designate well being in general usage has employed the word *wealth* to signify, first, the comparative welfare resulting from material possession and, second, and by a transfer, the possessions themselves.

Wealth then consists in the relative well constituting elements in man's material environment. It is objective to the user, material, useful, and appropriable . . .

— JOHN B. CLARK *The Philosophy of Wealth*

We can see that what the author has done is to start with the derivation of the word and show how the meaning has become specialized by the addition of differentiae. Then he gives the differentiae that distinguish wealth from other kinds of *weal*, or well-being.

Since the *differentiae* are complicated, he does not simply list them, but explains each one.

Here is another, somewhat more elaborate definition of *wealth*, in which the author uses a different approach to definition. Whereas Clark builds his definition by *including* the *differentiae* properly belonging to the term, Hilaire Belloc, the author of the definition to follow, begins by *excluding* the *differentiae* that do not properly belong.

The economic definition of Wealth is subtle and difficult to appreciate. . . . First, we must be clear as to what Wealth is *not*.

Wealth is never properly defined, for the purpose of economic study, by any one of the answers a person would naturally give off-hand. For instance, most people would say that a man's wealth was the money he was worth. But that, of course, is nonsense; for even if there were no money used, his possessions would still be there, and if he had a house and cattle and horses, the mere fact that money was not being used where he lived would not make him any worse off.

Another and better, but still wrong, answer is: "Wealth is what a man possesses." For instance, in the case of this farmer, his house and his stock and his furniture and implements are what we call his "wealth." In ordinary talk that answer will do well enough. But it will not do for the strict science of Economics, for it is not accurate.

For consider a particular case. Part of this man's wealth is, you say, a certain gray horse. But if you look closely at your definition and make it rigidly accurate, you will find that *it is not the horse itself which constitutes his wealth, but something attaching to the horse, some quality or circumstance which affects the horse and gives the horse what is called its value*. It is this *value* which is wealth, not the horse. To see how true this is consider how the value changes while the horse remains the same.

On such and such a date any neighbor would have given the owner of the horse from 20 to 25 sacks of wheat for it, or, say, 10 sheep, or 50 loads of cut wood. But suppose there comes a great mortality among horses, so that very few are left. There is an eager desire to get hold of those that survive in order that the work may be done on the farms. Then the neighbors will be willing to give the owner of the horse much more than 20 to 25 sacks of wheat for it. They may offer as much as 50 sacks, or 20 sheep, or 100 loads of wood. Yet the horse is exactly the same horse it was before. The wealth of the master has increased. His horse, as we say, is "worth more." *It is this Worth, that is, this ability to get other wealth in exchange, which constitutes true Economic Wealth.*

I have told you that the idea is very difficult to seize, and that you will find the hardest part of the study here at the beginning. There

is no way to make it plainer. One has no choice but to master the idea and make oneself familiar with it, difficult as it is. *Wealth does not reside in the objects we possess, but in the economic values attaching to those objects.*

We talk of a man's wealth or a nation's wealth, or the wealth of the whole world, and we think at once, of course, of a lot of material things: houses and ships, and pictures and furniture, and food and all the rest of it. But the economic wealth which it is our business to study is not identical with those *things*. Wealth is the sum total of the *values* attaching to those things.

That is the first and most important point.

Here is the second: Wealth, for the purposes of economic study, is *confined to those values attaching to material objects through the action of man, which values can be exchanged for other values.*

I will explain what that sentence means.

Here is a mountain country where there are few people and plenty of water everywhere. That water does not form part of the *Economic Wealth* of anyone living there. Everyone is the better off for the water, but no one has *wealth* in it. The water they have is absolutely necessary to life, but no man will give anything for it because any man can get it for himself. It has no *value in exchange*. But in a town to which water has to be brought at great expense of effort, and where the amount is limited, it acquires a value in exchange, that is, people cannot get it without offering something for it. That is why we say that in a modern town water forms part of *Economic Wealth*, while in the country it usually does not.

We must carefully note that wealth thus defined is *not* the same thing as well-being. The mixing up of these two separate things—well-being and economic wealth—has given rise to half the errors in economic science. People confuse the word "wealth" with the idea of well-being. They say: "Surely a man is better off with plenty of water than with little, and therefore conditions under which he can get plenty of water for nothing are conditions under which he has *more wealth* than when he has to pay for it. He has more wealth when he gets the water free than he has when he has to pay for it."

It is not so. Economic wealth is a separate thing from well-being. Economic wealth may well be increasing though the general well-being of the people is going down. It may increase though the general well-being of the people around it is stationary.

The science of Economics does not deal with true happiness nor even with well-being in material things. It deals with a strictly limited field of what is called "Economic Wealth," and if it goes outside its own boundaries it goes wrong. Making people as happy as possible is much more than Economics can pretend to. Economics cannot even tell you how to make people well-to-do in material things. But it **can** tell you how exchangeable Wealth is produced and what happens to it; and as it can tell you this, it is a useful servant.

That is the second difficulty at the very beginning of our study  
*Economic Wealth consists in exchangeable values, and nothing else*

Let us sum up this first elementary part of our subject and put it in the shortest terms we can find — what are called *Formulae* which means short and exact definitions, such as can be learnt by heart and retained permanently

We write down then two *Formulae*

1 *Wealth is made up, not of things, but of economic values attaching to things*

2 *Wealth, for the purpose of economic study means only exchange values that is, values against which other values will be given in exchange*  
— HILAIRE BELLOC *Economics for Young People*

The maker of this definition of *wealth* starts by ruling out certain common misconceptions. Wealth is not money. Wealth is not what a man possesses. But merely to rule out these errors requires discussion and illustration, through which we arrive at the notion that the "ability to get other wealth in exchange" is the key to the definition, that wealth resides not "in the objects we possess, but in the economic values attaching to those objects."

This statement gives us, of course, a genus (*value*) and differentiae (summed up under the term *economic*). We have a notion what the genus *value* means, but the differentiae are not clear to us. The writer, then, sets about explaining that economic value is exchange value, "values attaching to material objects through the action of man, which can be exchanged for other values." He discusses this idea by illustration, the illustration of water in the country and water in the town. This discussion leads him to make a sharp distinction between wealth and well being, thus making a definition exactly opposite that of the previous writer. Having completed his explanation, Belloc is prepared to set up what he calls his formulas, which embody both his definition of wealth as economic value and a summary of his explanation of economic value, which amounts to another definition. So here, to understand one definition we have to have another.

### *Method of extended definition*

[There are many ways to compose an extended definition.] We see that in the first of the two definitions given above the writer takes as his key the derivation of the word *wealth* from the Anglo-Saxon *weal*. In the other definition, the author begins by excluding certain things from his definition, by dealing, that is, with what he thinks are misconceptions.

[We can readily see that an extended definition usually involves

other methods of exposition, such as classification and comparison, and may involve other types of discourse, such as description and narration. In fact, an extended definition may simply be the beginning of an essay which moves from an extended definition to a discussion of the topic in question.]

Let us now examine a student theme which has the purpose of making and explaining a definition:

#### A TRUE PATRIOT

**I. Introduction:**

Definition not yet begun;  
statement of need for a definition

In these times when our country is going through dangers, everyone claims to be a patriot, and many people attack their opponents by impugning their patriotism. It seems to me that we would do well to define patriotism, to determine what we really mean by the word.

**II. Body of Discussion:**

**1. Basic definition**

The *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* says that the word *patriot* comes from the late Latin *patriota*, meaning "fellow-countryman." If my memory of Latin is correct, *patriota* derives from *patria*, or "fatherland." The dictionary definition of *patriot* most applicable to our present discussion is "One who exerts himself to promote the well-being of his country." *Patriotism* thus means "the love or zealous devotion" to the well-being of one's country.

**2. Reason why basic definition is not adequate**

But this definition, although it appears adequate, is not really satisfactory; for everyone, as I have said, claims to have love and devotion and to be promoting the well-being of the country. We must then decide first what *well-being* is and how one can best contribute to it, for a man who claims he is a patriot and perhaps really does love his country might still do more harm than good if he is promoting a cause detrimental to the general well-being. In other words, a man has to have good judgment before he can be a good patriot.

**3. First differentia: a man must understand well-being**

**4. Various kinds of contributions to well-being**

What exactly constitutes the well-being of a country? Well-being is no single thing but a composite of many things essential to the life of a country: a country has to have industry, business, agriculture, and

mining. It has to have educational institutions. It has to have civil service. It has to have writers and journalists, and artists and musicians. It has to have scientists and soldiers. It even has to have politicians. Whatever strengthens and improves any of these institutions, whatever gives us better writers, scientists, and politicians, contributes to the well-being of the country. Thus there are many ways of contributing. Perhaps the basic way is to do your job well, whatever it is.

5. Second differentia: risk discussed as step toward determining and differentia: unselfishness

Ordinarily, however, when we think of a patriot, or patriotism, we think of a spectacular deed, of Teddy Roosevelt leading a cavalry charge or of those men who let themselves be experimented on to discover the cause of yellow fever. What is the common quality in these spectacular deeds that makes them examples of patriotism? I think it is this: all these people are taking some kind of risk for their country.

6. But risk itself not enough; must be unselfish risk

You may say that any soldier takes a risk but that all soldiers are not outstanding patriots. There is a further qualification: the risk must be unselfish. If a man is drafted, and then gets into battle just because he cannot escape the watchful eye of the sergeant, and finally is shot you cannot consider him much of a patriot. He was simply trapped. He didn't take the risk; the risk took him. We have to say, then, that the patriot takes risks, unselfishly and in a spirit of self-sacrifice.

7. — as it must be an unselfish contribution

It follows, too, that if someone makes a contribution to his country, such as inventing a useful machine or practicing medicine, he isn't necessarily a patriot—his motives may be those of self-interest and the desire to make as much money as possible.

8. Third differentia: actual achievement not essential; essential thing is willingness to make sacrifice, to do duty no matter how simple

We think of the spectacular patriot because he illustrates the willingness to demonstrate "zealous devotion" for his country. But can a man be a patriot *unless* he takes a big risk? Isn't a man a

- g. Contrast with great achievement undertaken for selfish reason

patriot if he simply has the *willingness* to make a sacrifice, that is, do his duty as it happens to come along? Can't he exert himself just when the occasion arises? I think so. In fact, I'm inclined to admire more a man who has a quiet willingness to serve than those people who want to show off their patriotism, even if they are willing to take big risks in showing it off. One can never be sure whether they are taking risks for the country unselfishly or are taking risks just to feel important.

### III. Conclusion: Summary of defended definition

To summarize, I would say that a patriot is a man who makes an intelligent contribution to the well-being of his country, who is willing to take risks or make a self-sacrifice in so doing, even if his contribution isn't spectacular. Finally, the willingness must be genuinely for the sake of the country and not for the sake of showing off. Perhaps all these ideas and more are implicit in the words "love and devotion" in the dictionary definition, but I feel that they need expansion and clarification if we are really to understand the meaning of patriotism.

We can see from the marginal notes what the writer's outline — if he actually made one — may have been. If he did not make one, he was taking a risk, for in writing a definition it is very important to be systematic, to know where you are going before you start. In addition to the outline, let us try another device to see how carefully the writer has thought through his ideas. Here is the scheme of genus and species for the definition:

#### GENUS

Those who make contributions  
to well-being of country

#### SPECIES

1st differentia :	Intelligent contributors	Unwitting or unwilling contributors	Selfish, "show-off" contributors
2nd differentia :	Unselfish contributors		
3rd differentia :	Willing contributors		



So we have our old equation again. Much of the discussion in the theme was to explain distinctions needed to make the equation clear. The writer had, for instance, to explain the nature and variety of possible contributions to the country's well-being (II:4). He had to discuss why we think of risk first (because it is the most obvious form of unselfishness, or self-sacrifice — II:5,6); and then he had to apply the differentia of unselfishness to contributors in general (II:7). The equation has been fleshed out by discussion and we can see that *the main purpose of the discussion has been to give an understanding of the differentiae.*

Before we turn to Applications and the writing of a theme of extended definition, it should be emphasized once again that there is no single correct way to develop a definition. It is not even necessary that the definition be of the genus + differentia type. We define "2" as "1 + 1," and this is a proper definition, though it is not of the genus + differentia type. But most of the definitions that the student must make in his own writing are of that type, and his main problem will usually be to get his central conception right — that is, to see what the genus in question is and what the proper differentiae are. If he does that, then with common sense, he should have little difficulty with his organization, with the explanation and illustration of the differentiae.

## ■ Applications

I Criticize the student theme above for

- 1 Sentence structure
- 2 Punctuation
- 3 Paragraph structure

Do you think you could improve the general organization?  
What grade would you give it?

II The following is an example of extended definition. What are the genus and differentiae? How is the definition developed?

Chemistry is that branch of science which has the task of investigating the materials out of which the universe is made. It is not concerned with the forms into which they may be fashioned. Such objects as chairs, tables, vases, bottles, or wires are of no significance in chemistry; but such substances as glass, wool, iron, sulfur, and clay, as the materials out of which they are made, are what it studies. Chemistry is concerned not only with the composition

of such substances, but also with their inner structure. Further, these materials are constantly undergoing change in nature: iron rusts, wood decays, sugar ferments, coal burns, limestone rock is eaten away by water, and living organisms digest their foods and build up their structures. Chemistry investigates such changes—the conditions under which they occur, the mechanism by which they take place, the new substances that are formed as their result, and the energy that is liberated or absorbed by them. Chemistry also studies the way in which these and similar changes can be carried out in the laboratory or on a larger scale in the chemical plant. As a result of investigations along these lines, chemistry has found how metals can be extracted from their ores; how impoverished fields can be made fertile again; and how the materials that are found in nature can be converted into thousands of new substances to help feed the race, to cure the sick, and to provide such comfort and even luxury for the common man as was not enjoyed by the wealthy of an earlier generation.

— JOHN ARREND TIMM: *General Chemistry*

- III** Here are some statements about religion. Which are definitions? In any which does not have the form of definition, can you see what definition may lie behind the statement? What genus and differentiae are involved in each definition?

**A** "Religion, after trying to see as best I could what various religions and religious people had in common, I felt impelled to define as the reaction of the personality as a whole to its experience of the Universe as a whole." — J. S. HUXLEY

**B** Religion is "morality tinged with emotion." — MATTHEW ARNOLD

**C** Religion is the "belief in spiritual beings." — E. B. TYLOR

**D** Religion is "that voice of the deepest human experience." — MATTHEW ARNOLD

**E** Religion is the "opium of the people." — KARL MARX

**F** Religion is "a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct or control the course of nature and of human life." — SIR JAMES FRAZER

**G** "Pure religion and undefiled before God is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." — ST. JAMES

- IV** Write an extended definition (600 words or more) of one of the words listed below, or on some word approved by your instructor, using the following pattern of discussion insofar as it will apply in the particular case:

- 1 Derivation of the word — does the origin enlighten us?
- 2 History of the application of the word — do earlier applications differ from the present application?

- 3 Genus and differentiae in present application — how can the species be distinguished from other significant species?
- 4 Analysis of species — does it have any “subspecies,” and if so, how are they to be distinguished from one another?
- 5 Application of the definition to individual instances — does the definition really meet this test, and does it enlighten us about the individual instances?

republic	empire	contemplate
cynicism	imagination	radical
fascism	theology	democracy
culture	cathedral	

(Note: For the derivation of a word, any large dictionary can be consulted. For the history of its applications, the *Oxford English Dictionary* provides the best source of information. For other sources of special information required in extending the definition, the instructor can provide suggestions. Most of the work for this theme will be in the reading and thinking before you begin to write. Study your subject. Be sure that you have something to say. Then prepare an outline before you actually begin to write. Turn in the outline with your theme.)

### THE THIRD METHOD: CLASSIFICATION

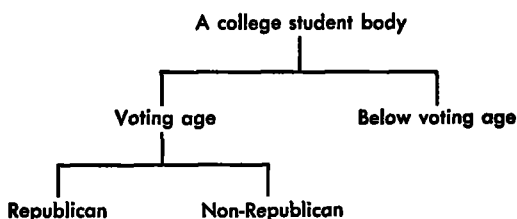
In studying definition, we found that we were distinguishing one species from all other species under a particular genus (pages 45-47). In other words, we had to sort out various species under the general group or class — the genus. When we discussed the common ground of definition, we found that sometimes we had to concern ourselves not with just one group, or genus, and its subdivisions, but with a series of groups in descending order (page 48). We have, in fact, in our study of definition, been using the method of classification.

(*Classification* is a way of thinking in terms of a system of classes.

By a *class* we mean a group whose members have significant characteristics in common. What constitutes a significant characteristic may vary according to the interest involved.) For example, a maker of cosmetics may think of women in groups determined by complexion, and the secretary of a Y.W.C.A. may think in groups determined by religious affiliations. (What is significant for one is not significant for the other.) Similarly, the registrar of a college may group students according to grades, and the gymnasium instructor,

according to athletic ability. The registrar and the gymnasium instructor have different interests in classifying the same body of students.

By a *system* we mean a set of classes ranging from the most inclusive down through the least inclusive. Let us set up a simple example of such a system:

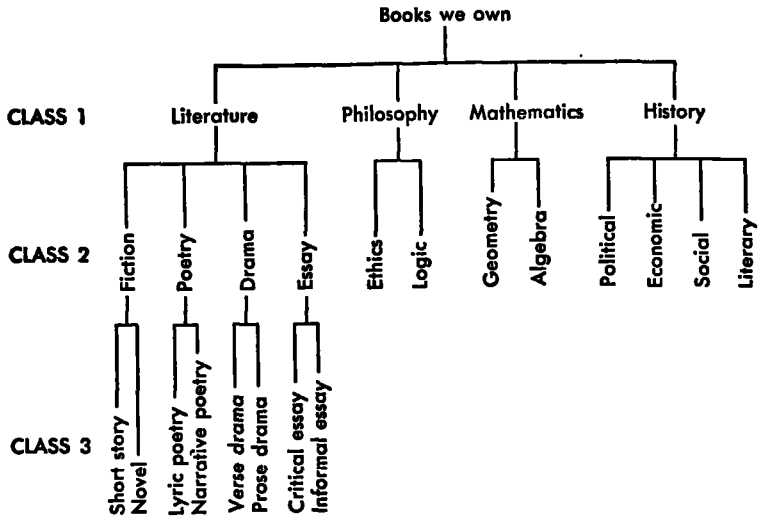


Here the group *student body* is the most inclusive class. Under it we find classes less and less inclusive.

This system, we observe, indicates only two classes at any one stage: *voting age* and *below voting age*, *Republican* and *non-Republican*. Such a system, which has an *X* and *non-X* for each stage, is called *simple*. But we can readily see that we might find it useful to have more than this simple pairing at any one stage.

For instance, let us imagine that our books have been in storage and are delivered to us in a great mixed-up heap in the middle of the library floor. We know that it would be almost useless to arrange our library merely in terms of, say, literature and nonliterature. If we lumped the nonliterature together on the shelves, we should have a bad time finding anything in a hurry. We need some other classes *at the same stage* as the class of literature. For example, history, philosophy, and mathematics. Then, if we have many books, we may need to carry our classification down another stage or two. We would get a scheme — a *complex one* } something like the diagram on page 62.

This scheme indicates the classification of the books in this particular collection. Of course, the collection does not include examples of all kinds of books. For example, in class 1 we do not have science or theology. In class 2 under philosophy we have only ethics and logic, and under mathematics, only geometry and algebra. In class 3 under poetry, we have only lyric and narrative poetry, and under the essay, only critical and informal essays. So we find many classes missing in our particular scheme, classes which would appear in the scheme for the classification of books for a great general library, such as a university library. The method of classification



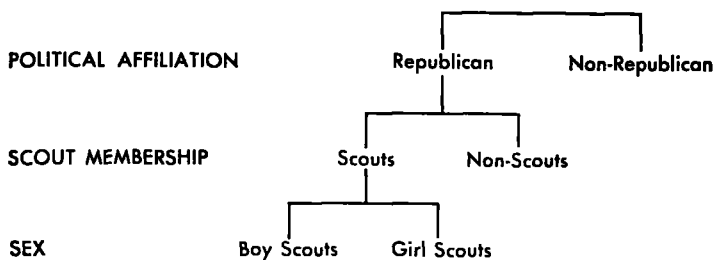
for our little collection and that for the great library are, however, the same. [The complex scheme recognizes at each stage all the classes available.] all the books, say, in our personal library, or all in a university library, or all in a publishing catalogue.

### *Requirements of classification*

[To be useful a scheme of classification must fulfill certain requirements:

1. There can be only one principle applied at each stage.
2. The subclasses under any class must account for all the members of the class.]

We can best understand what is at stake in Rule 1 by taking an example. Sometimes we want to work a classification in reference to more than one interest. Suppose some political organization wants to find out about the Republican co-eds in the college who have been in the Scouts. We have, obviously, three interests to be considered in a classification: (1) political affiliation, (2) membership in the Scouts, and (3) sex. We can't mix these interests up in a single stage. We have to work them out one at a time. We have already in Scheme I (page 61) worked out the classification down to *Republican* and *non-Republican*. Now under *Republican* we can distinguish *Scouts* and *non-Scouts*; then, having done that, we can, under *Scouts*, distinguish *Boy Scouts* and *Girl Scouts*.



[In other words, when a new interest enters, we really start a new classification and hang it onto the appropriate subclass of the classification we have just completed. This method can be applied to a complex classification as well as to a simple one such as we have given above.

The problem involved in Rule 2 does not arise in simple classification. Obviously, such a classification as *Republican* and *non-Republican*, for example, must exhaust the members of the student body. But if we are making a complex classification, we have to be certain that our sorting is complete. In dealing with political affiliations, for instance, we would have to determine the composition of the group non-Republican, such as Democratic, Socialist, Liberal, etc.

### *The use of classification*

We may ask ourselves what the making of such schemes of classifications has to do with writing exposition. The answer is simple: The scheme, we may say, is simply a way of sorting out things, tying them up in bunches, labeling the bunches, and indicating the relations among the bunches. It is one way of organizing a hodgepodge of things or ideas; and the particular system we use is dictated, we remember, by some interest we bring to bear on the original hodgepodge. What we do in making a classification is comparable to what we do in the process of finding a true subject (see Chapter 2, page 10). In classification the process is carried down to the subdivisions of the topic. For instance, if we are interested in religion, we classify the student body by religious affiliation; if in politics, we classify it by political affiliation. Classification is, then, simply one way of thinking about the material of our piece of exposition to give order to it; and the kind of order we get comes from distinguishing the subgroups within a group.

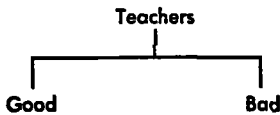
A scheme of classification provides a kind of outline, an outline

that needs to be expanded. Just as the short definition can be expanded into an essay, so the scheme of classification may be developed at considerable length, as we explore the implications of our original scheme. }

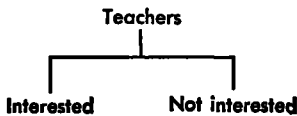
Here is a student theme based on a classification:

#### TEACHERS I HAVE KNOWN

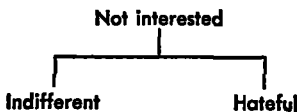
##### STAGE I



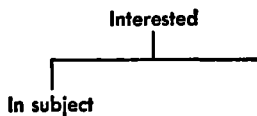
##### STAGE I (second version)



##### STAGE II



##### STAGE II



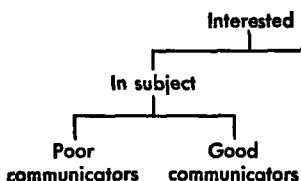
In my thirteen and a half years at school, I have, of course, known many teachers; I have made rather a hobby of studying my teachers because I hope one day to become a teacher myself. There are many kinds of teachers, but they can all be classified under one of two headings — good and bad. Fortunately for students there are many more teachers under the first heading than under the second.

Actually, it does not mean much to say that teachers are good or bad — the same can be said of people in any profession. A better way of separating the teachers that really teach from those that just stand up in front of a class is to ask how they got to be teachers in the first place: Did they become teachers because they were really interested in their subject and in young people, or did they just drift into the profession through indifference or necessity?

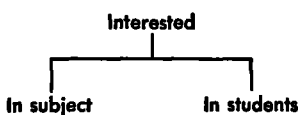
I should like to dispose of the second category first. There is little need to say much about such teachers; every student has known a few of them. Either they are indifferent toward their job, in which case the class is terribly boring, and the students fool around; or they actively hate teaching. Then watch out! The best thing to do in a class like that is to keep quiet and do just as much work as necessary to avoid the teacher's notice.

The other teachers are much more interesting, and there are many more kinds of them. Some become teachers because of an intense interest in their subject. They may be great teachers or well-known researchers; particularly in college, they may be outstanding men in their field.

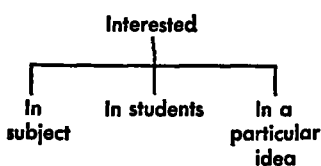
### STAGE III



### STAGE II



### STAGE II



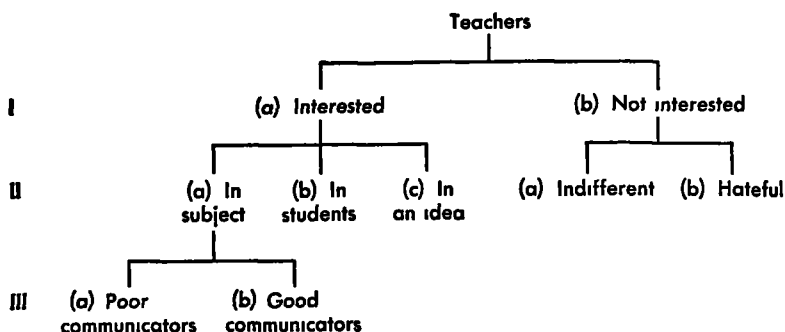
Some of them do not have the ghost of a notion how to put their subject across; they may not even try particularly, for students simply don't exist for them. All that matters is the subject. Even so, the student can get a lot out of their courses *if* he puts some effort into understanding them. Other teachers in this category do have a gift for organizing and communicating their subject. Their classes are a constant challenge—the teacher is not likely to make his subject easy!—and a delight.

Another variety of teacher with a purpose is the kind who is interested in his students. He is not a scholar; his main motivation is to help students. That is his mission in life. At the college level you probably find fewer of these teachers than in elementary or high school. I remember particularly my seventh-grade arithmetic teacher. It was a bad year for me; more than once I got into trouble with the school authorities. But this teacher was so decent to me that I became ashamed of myself; I started to behave better, and I even learned some arithmetic. Miss Jones may not have been a great mathematician, but she did me more good and taught me more than many other teachers I have had.

I should mention one other kind of interested teacher, a kind to be careful of. That is the teacher who wants to indoctrinate his students. He believes fanatically that all automobile engines should be limited to 60 horsepower, and he wants you to believe this, too. He is likely to spend lots of class time preaching about this *idée fixe*, and that time will be largely wasted for you. But otherwise he may be an excellent teacher. You should be tolerant and remember that the teacher is just a person, too.

This theme, it is clear, is based on a classification, as we have indicated along the left margin. If we assemble the notes on the margin, we find a scheme like this:





### ■ Applications

- I In the above theme, does the student develop the classification system as indicated in the diagrams? If not, where does he fail to develop it? Is his classification system exhaustive? If not, how would you expand it?
- II Write a theme of some 400 words based on a scheme of classification. The following list may be helpful, but do not feel limited to it

Liars I have known  
Trout flies  
Patriots  
Breeds of horses

Philanthropy  
Friendship  
Choosing a shotgun  
Parties

## THE FOURTH METHOD: ILLUSTRATION

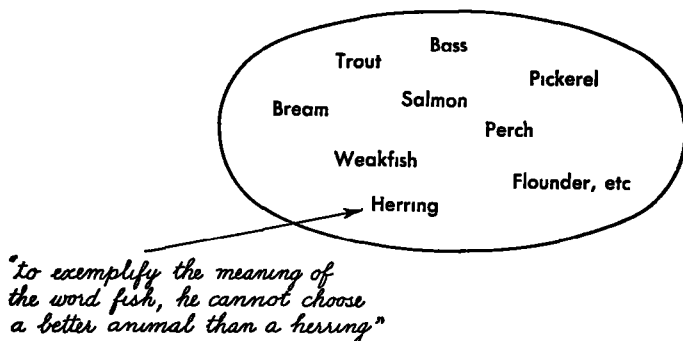
We all know what illustration is. It is one of the most common ways we have for explaining an idea, whether in writing or speaking. We are constantly saying "for illustration" or "for example," by which we mean that we are going to cite something specific to support or clarify a general point. Here is an example of the method of illustration.

If anyone wants to exemplify the meaning of the word "fish," he cannot choose a better animal than a herring. The body, tapering to each end, is covered with thin, flexible scales, which are very easily rubbed off. The taper head, with its underhung jaw, is smooth and scaleless on the top; the large eye is partly covered by two folds of transparent skin, like eyelids—only immovable and with the slit between them vertical instead of horizontal; the cleft behind the gill cover is very wide and, when the cover is raised, the large red gills

which lie underneath it are freely exposed. The rounded back bears the single moderately long dorsal fin about its middle.

— THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY "The Herring"

We may indicate by a diagram what Huxley has done



[Illustration, like definition and classification, is a way of thinking in terms of classes. In definition we seek to understand the particular (an individual instance or a subgroup) by placing it in relation to a class. In classification we arrange particulars in terms of a class, or classes, as we indicate in the pictures on pages 61 and 62. In illustration we use a particular to explain a class, to help us grasp it better — herring to explain fish. The class which is explained by the particular, the illustration, may be a type or thing or person, a type of method, a general idea, a general condition, and so on. The illustration must truly represent the chief qualities of the class. At the same time it may have individual characteristics which enhance its interest to the reader.]

When Huxley chose the herring to exemplify fish in general, he was not choosing an individual fish. He was choosing a species. Below, however, we see an individual, not a species, used for illustration. The very first sentence tells us that the outlaw Billy the Kid, an individual, is going to be described as the representative, almost the perfect representative, of the desperado type of the Old West. Mixed in with some of his merely individual traits — his build, his love of dancing — we find the qualities that mark the type.

The secret of Billy the Kid's greatness as a desperado — and by connoisseurs in such matters he was rated as an approach to the ideal desperado type — lay in a marvellous coordination between mind and body. He had not only the will but the skill to kill. Daring coolness and quick thinking would not have served unless they had been combined with physical quickness and a marksmanship which enabled him

to pink a man neatly between the eyes with a bullet at, say, thirty paces. He was not pitted against six-shooter amateurs but against experienced fighters themselves adept in the handling of weapons. The men he killed would have killed him if he had not been their master in a swifter deadliness. In times of danger, his mind was not only calm but singularly clear and nimble, watching like a hawk for an advantage and seizing it with incredible celerity. He was able to translate an impulse into action with the suave rapidity of a flash of light. While certain other men were a fair match for him in target practice, no man in the Southwest, it is said, could equal him in the lightning-like quickness with which he could draw a six-shooter from its holster and with the same movement fire with deadly accuracy. It may be remarked incidentally that shooting at a target is one thing and shooting at a man who happens to be blazing away at you is something entirely different; and Billy the Kid did both kinds of shooting equally well.

His appearance was not unprepossessing. He had youth, health, good nature, and a smile — a combination which usually results in a certain sort of good looks. His face was long and colorless except for the deep tan with which it had been tinted by sun, wind, and weather and was of an asymmetry that was not unattractive. His hair was light brown, worn usually rather long and inclined to waviness. His eyes were gray, clear, and steady. His upper front teeth were large and slightly prominent and to an extent disfigured the expression of a well-formed mouth. His hands and feet were remarkably small. He was five feet eight inches tall, slender and well proportioned. He was unusually strong for his inches, having for a small man quite powerful arms and shoulders. He weighed, in condition, one hundred and forty pounds. When out on the range, he was as rough looking as any other cowboy. In towns, among the quality folk of the frontier, he dressed neatly and took not a little care in making himself personable. Many persons, especially women, thought him handsome. He was a great beau at fandangos and was considered a good dancer.

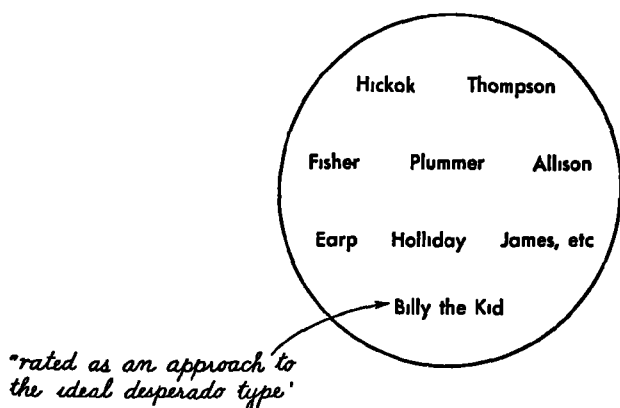
He had an air of easy, unstudied, devil-may-care insouciance which gave no hint of his dynamic energy. His movements were ordinarily deliberate and unhurried. But there was a certain element of calculation in everything he did. Like a billiardist who "plays a position," he figured on what he might possibly have to do next. This foresightedness and forehandedness even in inconsequential matters provided him with a sort of subconscious mail armor. He was forearmed even when not forewarned; forever on guard.

Like all the noted killers of the West, Billy the Kid was of the blond type. Wild Bill Hickok, Ben Thompson, King Fisher, Henry Plummer, Clay Allison, Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, Frank and Jesse James, the Youngers, the Daltons — the list of others is long — were all blond. There was not a pair of brown eyes among them. It was the gray and blue eye that flashed death in the days when the six-shooter ruled the

frontier This blondness of desperados is a curious fact contrary to popular imagination and the traditions of art and the stage The theater immemorially has portrayed its unpleasant characters as black haired and black eyed The popular mind associates swarthinness with villainy Blue eyes and golden hair are in the artistic canon a sort of heavenly hallmark No artist has yet been so daring as to paint a winged cherub with raven tresses and a search of the world's canvases would discover no brown eyed angel It may be remarked further, as a matter of incidental interest that the West's bad men were never heavy, stolid lowering brutes Most of them were good looking some remarkably so Wild Bill Hickok beau ideal of desperadoes, was considered the handsomest man of his day on the frontier, and with his blue eyes and yellow hair falling on his shoulders, he moved through his life of tragedies with something of the beauty of a Greek god So much for fact versus fancy Cold deadliness in Western history seems to have run to frosty coloring in eyes hair, and complexion

— WALTER NOBLE BURNS *The Saga of Billy the Kid*<sup>1</sup>

If we make a scheme for this discussion of Billy the Kid, we have something like that for Huxley's description of the herring as an illustration of fish.



In the passage just given, illustration is used to characterize a type of person — the desperado In the following selection, illustration is used to explain an idea — in this case, that of neighborliness.

A good neighbor, as the term was understood in the days when as a little girl I lived on a farm in Southern Michigan, meant all that nowadays is combined in corner store, telephone, daily newspaper, and radio But your neighbor was also your conscience You had to behave yourself on account of what the neighbors would think

<sup>1</sup> From *The Saga of Billy the Kid* by Walter Noble Burns Copyright 1925, 1926 by Doubleday and Company Inc

A good neighbor knew everything there was to know about you — and liked you anyway. He never let you down — as long as you deserved his good opinion. Even when you failed in that, if you were in trouble he would come to your rescue. If one of the family was taken sick in the night, you ran over to the neighbors to get some one to sit up until the doctor arrived. Only instead of sending for the doctor, you went for him. Or one of the neighbors did.

The Bouldrys were that kind of neighbors. Lem Bouldry was a good farmer and a good provider. Mis Bouldry kept a hired girl and Lem had two men the year round. They even had a piano while the most the other neighbors boasted was an organ or a melodeon. Mis' Bouldry changed her dress every afternoon (my mother did too, she said she thought more of herself when she did), and they kept the front yard mowed.

But the Covells were just the opposite — the most shiftless family the Lord ever let set foot on land. How they got along my father said he didn't know unless it was by the grace of God. Covell himself was ten years younger than my father yet everybody called him Old Covell. His face and hands were like sole leather and if his hair had ever been washed, it was only when he got caught in a rainstorm. Father said Old Covell would borrow the shirt off your back then bring it around to have it mended. Mother said, well one thing certain, he wouldn't bring it around to be washed.

Yet the time Mis Covell almost died with her last baby — and the baby did die — Mis Bouldry took care of her, took care of the rest of the children too — four of them. She stayed right there in the Covell house, just going home to catch a little sleep now and then. She had to do that, for there wasn't so much as an extra sheet in the house, much less an extra bed. And Mis Bouldry wasn't afraid to use her hands even if she did keep a hired girl — she did all the Covells' washing herself.

But even Old Covell, despite his shiftlessness, was a good neighbor in one way. He was a master hand at laying out the dead. Of course, he wasn't worth a cent to sit up with the sick for if it was Summer he'd go outside to smoke his pipe and sleep and if it was Winter he'd go into the kitchen and stick his feet in the oven to warm them and go to sleep there. But a dead man seemed to rouse some kind of pride and responsibility in him. There was no real undertaker nearer than ten miles, and often the roads were impassable. Folks sent for my mother when a child or woman died, but Old Covell handled all the men. Though he never wore a necktie himself, he kept on hand a supply of celluloid collars and little black bow ties for the dead. When he had a body to lay out, he'd call for the deceased's best pants and object strenuously if he found a hole in the socks. Next, he'd polish the boots and put on a white shirt, and fasten one of his black ties to the collar button. All in all, he would do a masterly job.

Of course, nobody paid Old Covell for this. Nobody ever thought

of paying for just being neighborly. If anybody had offered to, they'd have been snubbed for fair. It was just the way everybody did in those half-forgotten times. — DELLA T. LUTES: "Are Neighbors Necessary?"<sup>2</sup>

The three selections above are expository, but (with the exception of the description of the herring) the way of illustrating is not expository. [If illustration is to be effective, it must usually have something of the vividness and individuality that are characteristic of description and narration. Nevertheless, that vividness and individuality must be used with reference to the expository intention which gives unity to the composition.] The quaint habit of Old Covell, in the last selection, of keeping a supply of celluloid collars and the little black bow ties for the dead he laid out, is a vivid, individualizing trait, but this is only his individual way of expressing the general notion of neighborliness. [The good illustration, no matter how vivid and individual it may be, always makes us see more sharply than before the type or idea being illustrated.]

## ■ Application

Write a theme of some 300 words using the method of illustration. Remember that you have two obligations: the first, to make your particular example interesting in itself, and, the second, to make it truly representative of its group, type, class, or idea. And remember that there is no reason why you should not use more than one illustration if you find it convenient to do so.

In fulfilling the first requirement, you want to be specific in identifying the chosen example and use details that catch our attention: the scales of the herring, Billy the Kid's teeth, the little black ties kept on hand by Old Covell.

In fulfilling the second requirement, you must be sure that you know what really are the essential qualities of the type (or idea) that you wish to illustrate, as contrasted with merely individual qualities of your example, and you must be sure that your example possesses those qualities, plus whatever individualizing ones you may use. If the qualities of the type are fairly numerous and complicated, be sure that you are systematic in establishing the connection between your example and those qualities. You may organize your theme by giving a generalized description of your subject, say a good officer, and then presenting your example. Or you may present

<sup>2</sup> From "Are Neighbors Necessary?" by Della T. Lutes. Reprinted by permission of the *American Mercury* and Mrs. Cecily I. Dodd.

your example, say an individual officer, and indicate in the course of your presentation the qualities of the type embodied in the individual. But be sure you find some way to give your theme a shape. Go back to the examples we have had in this section and try to see what method of organizing has been used, what way of shaping the whole theme.

If none of the following topics interests you, use one of your own.

What makes a good officer?	Something will turn up
The campus go-getter	A typical ranch
True courtesy	Laziness pays
The fraternity man	Citizenship
Family happiness	A mother
A balanced life	The importance of money
Cowardice	Child of the slum
Hope springs eternal	The American town
A good novel	A good movie

## THE FIFTH METHOD: COMPARISON AND CONTRAST

[In *comparison*, as a method of exposition, we clarify a subject by indicating similarities between two or more things; in *contrast*, by indicating differences. We constantly and instinctively use comparison and contrast, but not always for expository purposes. For example, a poet making a comparison in a poem or a painter making a contrast of two forms in planning the composition of a picture may not be doing so for an expository purpose. The poet or the painter is acting with an appreciative or artistic motivation, as contrasted with an expository or scientific one, and all of us, even though we may not write poems or paint pictures, sometimes make comparisons and contrasts out of a similar motivation to gain vividness, to appeal to the imagination.]

[We also use comparison constantly and instinctively for expository purposes.] A child asks, "What is a zebra?" And we may reply, "Oh, a zebra—it's an animal sort of like a mule, but it's not as big as a mule. And it has stripes like a tiger, black and white stripes all over. But you remember that a tiger's stripes are black and orange." Here we have used both comparison and contrast. We have compared the shape of the zebra to that of the mule, but have contrasted the two animals in size. And we have compared the stripes of the zebra to the stripes of a tiger, but have contrasted them in color. If the child knows what mules and tigers are like, he now

has a pretty good idea of a zebra. Our informal application of comparison and contrast can be made more useful if we are systematic.

### *Area of interest*

To be systematic means, for one thing, to realize that mere similarities and differences are not very instructive. If we happen to observe that a passing cloud is shaped like a camel or that a spot on the wall looks like a snail, the observation is merely casual. By the resemblance we learn nothing about clouds or camels, wall damp or snails.

The significant comparison or contrast is between two or more items within a special area of interest, two members, that is, of a group or class which is established by a special interest brought to the material. A zoologist, for example, may profitably compare and contrast a hawk and a garter snake, for his interest in them as living creatures stemming from a common remote ancestor would embrace them both and make his study significant. An aeronautical engineer might compare the hawk and an airplane, but it isn't likely that he would find as much profit in putting an airplane and a garter snake together.

As we have just seen, the hawk may appear in more than one area of interest. Anything, in fact, can be thought of in different ways and can be put in different areas of interest. A farmer looks at a field and thinks of the quality of the soil, of drainage, of the exposure, and so on. He puts the field in the class of *arable land* and compares or contrasts this field with other tracts with which he is familiar. But suppose that an infantry officer comes along and looks at the same field. He may well think of how defensible a position might be found here. He would, that is, put the field in the class *defensible position* and compare or contrast it with other spots. What we are saying is that we set up the area of interest for comparison or contrast, and then we draw the two or more particular items out of the class to provide the basis of comparison and contrast.

We bring our interest to bear on a situation, but our interests, of course, are not unchangeable. The military man may also be a farmer, and one moment he may regard the field as in the class *defensible position*, and the next, as in the class *arable land*. Or he may also be interested in painting, and at a particular moment he may think neither of crops nor of machine-gun emplacement, but of the color relations of the landscape.



### *Kinds of purpose*

[To be systematic means, we have just seen, to understand the area of interest for comparison and contrast. But to be systematic also means to understand the purpose for which the items are put up against one another for inspection.

We may distinguish three types of purpose. According to the first purpose, we may wish to present information about one item and may do so by relating it to another item with which our audience is familiar.] For example, if we wish to explain the British Parliament to a fellow American, we may do so by comparing it with our Congress, which our fellow American does know about.

[According to the second purpose, we may wish to inform about both items of the comparison or contrast, but to do so by treating them in relation to some general principle which would apply to both and with which our audience is presumed to be familiar.] For example, if we are reviewing two novels, with neither of which our audience is acquainted, we may compare and contrast them by reference to what we assume our audience knows about the principles of fiction.

[According to the third purpose, we may compare and contrast items with which the audience is familiar for the purpose of informing about some general principle or idea.] For instance, if we want to arrive at a notion of what religion is, we may compare and contrast several kinds, say Protestantism, Catholicism, Buddhism, and the religion of the Aztecs, to show what elements they have in common. In this process, we are, of course, using comparison and contrast as a way to move back from our examples, or illustrations, to a general description of the class to which the particulars belong. (See pages 139-42, under Argument.)

[To sum up: to be systematic in making a comparison or contrast means (1) that we have to know from what area of interest the things being treated are drawn, and (2) that we have to know what purpose dictates the comparison or contrast.]

### ■ *Applications*

- I Describe one area of interest (or more) for each of the following sets of items, and give a few points of comparison or contrast for each set.

Chess, bridge, and poker

Carpentry and writing verse

Andrew Jackson, U. S. Grant, and Dwight Eisenhower

The postal system and socialized medicine  
New Orleans and San Francisco  
New York and ancient Rome  
The Nile and the Mississippi  
An athlete and a musician  
The poet and the advertising man  
Napoleon and Robert E. Lee  
Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson

- II Give five different sets of items for comparison or contrast, and state your reason for putting each set of items together.

### *Ways of organizing comparison and contrast*

When we come to apply comparison and contrast in extended form, we find that there are two general ways of organizing the material. We may fully present one item and then fully present the other, or, we may present a part of one item and then a part of the other, until we have touched on all the parts relevant to our comparison or contrast.

Each of these ways of organization has its utility. The first method is, generally speaking, appropriate when the points of comparison and contrast are fairly broad and obvious. But when a great many details are involved, the second method is more apt to be useful. It is possible, too, to use a compromise between the two methods. One can present the first of the items in full and then, in presenting the second, refer the reader, point by point, to the earlier treatment.]

Here is an example of the first type of organization in a student's theme:

#### MY CHILDHOOD

My father died when I was a small child, and I do not even remember him. I was raised by my mother and my maternal grandfather, in whose home we lived until I came to college. My mother loved her father, and I have no reason to think he did not love her, but they were so different that I was aware from the first of a conflict between them. Or, if it was not a direct conflict between them, it was a conflict between what they stood for. And both of them exerted a strong influence over me. Therefore, as I grow up, I think more and more about their contrasting personalities and values and try to detect in myself the traces of each of them.

My grandfather, whose name was Carruthers McKenzie, was of Scotch-Irish blood and belonged to the Presbyterian Church. He had a long, bony face, sunken cheeks, and a straggly beard. He was a man

with an iron will if I ever saw one, and all of his way of life was one long discipline for himself and everybody about him. But it was a discipline chiefly for himself. He never spent a day in bed in his life until his last illness, and yet he was probably ill a good part of his life. After he died — and he died of a cancer of the stomach — the doctor told us that he could not understand how any man could keep on his feet so long without giving in to the pain.

There was discipline enough left over for my mother and me and the two Negroes who worked about the place. We had morning prayers and evening prayers. I had to read the Bible an hour a day and learn long passages by heart. My grandfather was a prosperous man, but I never had a nickel to spend which I had not earned, and his rates of payment for my chores were not generous. From the time I was eight, I had to study three hours in the afternoon and at least two hours at night, except for week ends. My grandfather never uttered a word of praise to me except now and then the statement, "You have done your duty." As one could guess, my grandfather never told jokes, was scrupulous about all kind of obligations, never touched an alcoholic beverage or even soft drinks, and wore sober black, winter and summer.

My mother must have taken after her own mother, who was of South-German parentage and a Catholic by training. My mother's mother had given up her religion to marry my grandfather and had taken on his way of life, but she died very young. My mother was rather short in stature and had a rather full but graceful figure, the kind they call "partridge-y." She had round, pink cheeks and a complexion like a child's. She had blue eyes, very large. She loved to laugh and joke and spent a great deal of time in the kitchen with Sally, the Negro cook. They laughed and talked together a great deal. My mother was a good mother, as the phrase goes; she loved me and she was careful of all my wants. But she also liked idleness. She would sit on the veranda half the afternoon and look across the yard, just rocking in her chair and enjoying the sunshine. And she went to bridge parties and even took an occasional glass of wine or, as I imagine, a highball.

She was made for a good time and noise and people, and when my grandfather was out of the house, she used to romp and play with me or take me on long walks in the country back of our place. After my father's death when I was six, I am sure that she would have got married very soon if she had not felt it best to keep me in my grandfather's home with the advantages which his prosperity would give me. When I was eighteen and went off to college, she got married.

She married the kind of man you would expect her to pick. He is big and strong-looking, with a heavy, black mustache with a little gray in it. He smokes cigars and he likes fine whisky. He has a Packard agency in the city, and he keeps a little plane out at the airport. He loves sports and a good time. My mother has married exactly the man for her, I think, and I am enough like my mother to think he is fine,

too But as I look back on my grandfather — he died three years ago, when I was seventeen — I have a great admiration for him and a sneaking affection

Here, in an excerpt from a discussion of English and American sportsmanship, is an example of the second method, which proceeds by a series of contrasts on different points of the items under discussion

Thanks to this universality of athletic sports, English training is briefer and less severe The American makes, and is forced to make, a long and tedious business of getting fit, whereas an Englishman has merely to exercise and sleep a trifle more than usual, and this only for a brief period Our oarsmen work daily from January to July, about six months, or did so before Mr Lehmann brought English ideas among us, the English varsity crews row together nine or ten weeks Our football players slog daily for six or seven weeks, English teams seldom or never "practice and play at most two matches a week Our track athletes are in training at frequent intervals throughout the college year and are often at the training table six weeks, in England six weeks is the maximum period of training, and the men as a rule are given only three days a week on the cinder track To an American training is an abnormal condition, to an Englishman it is the consummation of the normal

— JOHN CORBIN *An American at Oxford*

The third way of organizing comparison and contrast — the mixture — is shown in the following selection, in which the author attempts to divide all humanity into "Red bloods" and "Mollycoddles"

We have divided men into Red bloods and Mollycoddles "A Red-blood man" is a phrase which explains itself, "Mollycoddle" is its opposite We have adopted it from a famous speech by Mr Roosevelt [Theodore Roosevelt], and redeemed it — perverted it, if you will — to other uses A few examples will make the notion clear Shakespeare's Henry V is a typical Red blood, so was Bismarck, so was Palmerston; so is almost any businessman On the other hand, typical Mollycoddles were Socrates, Voltane, and Shelley The terms, you will observe, are comprehensive and the types very broad Generally speaking, men of action are Red bloods Not but what the Mollycoddles may act, and act efficiently But, if so, the Mollycoddle acts from principle, not from the instinct for action The Red blood on the other hand, acts as the stone falls, and does indiscriminately anything that comes to hand It is thus that he carries on the business of the world He steps without reflection into the first place offered him and goes to work like a machine The ideals and standards of his family, his class, his city, his country, his age, he swallows as naturally as he swallows food and drink

He is therefore always "in the swim", and he is bound to "arrive," because he has set before him the attainable. You will find him every where in all the prominent positions. In a military age he is a soldier; in a commercial age a businessman. He hates his enemies, and he may love his friends, but he does not require friends to love. A wife and children he does require, for the instinct to propagate the race is as strong in him as all other instincts. His domestic life, however, is not always happy, for he can seldom understand his wife. This is part of his general incapacity to understand any point of view but his own. He is incapable of an idea and contemptuous of a principle. He is the Samson, the blind force, dearest to Nature of her children. He neither looks back nor looks ahead. He lives in present action. And when he can no longer act, he loses his reasons for existence. The Red blood is happiest if he dies in the prime of life, otherwise he may easily end with suicide. For he has no inner life, and when the outer life fails, he dies too. Nature, who has blown through him, blows elsewhere. His steps are numb, he is dead wood on the shore.

The Mollycoddle, on the other hand, is all inner life. He may in deed act, as I said, but he acts, so to speak, by accident, just as the Red blood may reflect, but reflects by accident. The Mollycoddle in action is the Crank, it is he who accomplishes reforms, who abolished slavery, for example, and revolutionized prisons and lunatic asylums. Still, primarily, the Mollycoddle is a critic, not a man of action. He challenges all standards and all facts. If an institution is established that is a reason why he will not accept it, if an idea is current that is a reason why he should repudiate it. He questions everything, including life and the universe. And for that reason Nature hates him. On the Red blood she heaps her favors, she gives him a good digestion, a clear complexion, and sound nerves. But to the Mollycoddle she apportions dyspepsia and black bile. In the universe and in society the Mollycoddle is "out of it" as inevitably as the Red blood is "in it." At school, he is a 'smug' or a 'swat,' while the Red blood is captain of the Eleven. At college, he is an "intellectual," while the Red blood is in the "best set." In the world, he courts failure while the Red blood achieves success. The Red blood sees nothing, but the Mollycoddle sees through everything. The Red blood joins societies; the Mollycoddle is a non joiner. Individualist of individualists, he can stand alone, while the Red blood requires the support of a crowd. The Mollycoddle engenders ideas, and the Red blood invents. The whole structure of civilization rests on foundations laid by Mollycoddles, but all the building is done by Red bloods. The Red blood despises the Mollycoddle, but, in the long run, he does what the Mollycoddle tells him. The Mollycoddle also despises the Red-blood, but he can not do without him. Each thinks he is master of the other, and, in a sense, each is right. In his lifetime the Mollycoddle may be the slave of the Red blood, but after his death, he is his master, though the Red blood may know it not.

Nations, like men, may be classified roughly as Red blood and Mollycoddle. To the latter class belong clearly the ancient Greeks, the Italians, the French and probably the Russians to the former the Romans, the Germans and the English. But the Red blood nation *par excellence* is the American, so that in comparison with them, Europe as a whole might almost be called Mollycoddle. This characteristic of Americans is reflected in the predominant physical type — the great jaw and chin, the huge teeth, the predatory mouth, in their speech, where beauty and distinction are sacrificed to force, in their need to live and feel and act in masses. To be born a Mollycoddle in America is to be born to a hard fate. You must either emigrate or succumb. This, at least hitherto, has been the alternative practiced. Whether a Mollycoddle will ever be produced strong enough to breathe the American atmosphere and live is a crucial question for the future. It is the question whether America will ever be civilized. For civilization, you will have perceived, depends on a just balance of Red bloods and Mollycoddles. Without the Red blood there would be no life at all, no stuff, so to speak, for the Mollycoddle to work upon, without the Mollycoddle, the stuff would remain shapeless and chaotic. The Red blood is the matter, the Mollycoddle the form, the Red blood the dough, the Mollycoddle the yeast. On these two poles turns the orb of human society. And if, at this point, you choose to say that the poles are points and have no dimensions, that strictly neither the Mollycoddle nor the Red blood exists, and that real men contain elements of both mixed in different proportions, I have no quarrel with you except such as one has with the man who states the obvious. I am satisfied to have distinguished the ideal extremes between which the Actual vibrates. The detailed application of the conception I must leave to more patient researchers.

— G. LOWES DICKINSON "Red bloods and Mollycoddles," *Appearances* \*

## ■ Applications

- I How has Dickinson utilized both methods of contrast in the above selection? Analyze it paragraph by paragraph. Do you feel that this selection is well organized? Why?
- II Set up the chart of classification used in this essay.
- III Work out in outline form the points of comparison or contrast for two or three of the following topics
  - 1 A country childhood and a city childhood
  - 2 Military life and civilian life
  - 3 Education in high school and education in college

\* From *Appearances* by G. Lowes Dickinson. Copyright 1914 by G. Lowes Dickinson. Reprinted by permission of Doubleday and Company, Inc.

- 4 George Washington and Abraham Lincoln
- 5 Catholicism and Protestantism
- 6 College football and professional football
- 7 The value of a liberal education and the value of a scientific education
- 8 Life on a farm and life on a ranch
- 9 Two novels
- 10 Two people you know
- 11 Poor relations and rich relations
- 12 The American temperament and some other national temperament

**IV** Write a theme of about 500 words on one of the above topics.

### THE SIXTH METHOD: ANALYSIS

[In studying the methods of exposition thus far we have been much concerned with the relation of the particular to the general, of the individual item to the class. This relation applies even in comparison and contrast, for, as we have seen, we compare the individual items in the light of some general principle, some area of interest. Now, when we turn to the method of *analysis* we treat the individual item, whatever it may be, not in relation to something more general or inclusive, but in relation to something in the item itself, in relation to its own parts.

*Analysis* is the method of dividing into component parts. (The word *analysis* actually means "loosening into parts.") It can be applied to anything that can be thought of as having parts. We can analyze an object, such as a dog, a house, a tree, a picture. We can analyze an organization, such as a church or a corporation. We can analyze a process such as baking bread, or an event, such as the French Revolution.

#### *Analysis, classification, and structure*

One may ask how analysis differs from classification, which we have already studied. A class includes the individual items in that class, and the act of classifying means sorting out the individual items of the class. But here is the difference from analysis. A class has no *structure*, and the individual items of the class are not *parts* of the class. An object or idea is an analyzable structure when its components are organized and have a mutually supporting function in determining the nature of the structure. A brick wall is a struc-

ture, for the individual bricks supporting one another are necessary to one another and to the wall. The human body is a structure, for the parts are mutually necessary and necessary to the whole. A class does not have these characteristics. A class exists as the *idea* of the qualities shared by a number of individual items. But no one item or set of items belonging to the class is necessary for the existence of the class. We can destroy one individual book, or a million, and the class of *book*, the idea of what constitutes a book, is not impaired. But we cannot knock many bricks from a wall or do much cutting on a human body. Nor can we omit a logical step from an argument, unless we can assume the hearer knows it already, nor omit an act from a play. The individual books have, as far as the class is concerned, no relation to one another except the sharing of those qualities necessary to define *book*, while the other things — the bricks or the act of the play — are necessarily related to the whole of which they are a part.

[In a structure there is some principle that determines the relation among the parts, and we must understand that principle in order to know what is significant in an analysis. If we are analyzing the ignition system of an automobile, we need to know enough about the principles of electricity to understand the significance of the spark plugs, the timer, and the generator. And we need to understand what qualities are *not* significant. We know, for example, that the color of the insulation of an automobile wiring system is not significant.]

### *Analysis, method, and interest*

[Analysis requires method, and the method of an analysis depends on the structure of the thing analyzed and the interest prompting the analysis. Different interests can dictate different analyses of the same thing. According to our different interests, we may regard the same thing as having various kinds of structure. For example, the botanist would regard an apple as a botanical structure and therefore would analyze it into stem, skin, flesh, seeds, and so forth; whereas a chemist would regard it as a chemical structure and would analyze it into certain elements, or a painter would regard it as an aesthetic structure and would analyze it into a pattern of color. Each man would perform his analysis in terms of a particular interest, and the interest prompting his analysis would decide the kind of structure which he took the object to be. The kind of structure would in turn determine what might be regarded as the parts of the structure.]



[What we have said may also apply to something with no physical form, such as an institution.] For instance, we may regard the family as an educational structure, an economic structure, or a moral structure. Each of these implies different relationships among the members of a family.

### *Analysis and technical (or expository) description*

[Analysis may be regarded as the description of a thing by distinguishing its parts. This kind of description, which we shall presently contrast with ordinary description, is called *technical* (or *expository*) *description*.

We can contrast technical description and ordinary description by considering the different types of occasion from which they arise. Technical description arises from the demand for *information about* the thing described; ordinary description, from the demand for an immediate sense impression of the thing described. The first kind of description is expository in that it attempts to enlarge the understanding. The second kind, ordinary description, aims to give us an experience of the object through imagination. (See Chapter 7, pages 165-70 for a fuller discussion.) We shall call it *suggestive description*.]

Let us take two examples and contrast them:

#### TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION:

##### *For Quick Sale*

Attractive Cape Cod cottage, lge. liv. rm., 13 x 25, knotty pine, stone fireplace; din. rm., sunny, 12 x 14; small den or libr., fireplace; kitchen, modern, elec. stove, lge. gas refrig., dishwasher, all practically new; med.-size, concrete basement, gas furn., ht. watr.; 2 bedrms., 14 x 16, 15 x 18; 2 baths, lge. and small; roof white oak shingle. Lot well planted, landscaped, brook, 2 acres; heated garage, 2 cars; small greenhouse. Built by owner, 1936. Excellent condition. Take reasonable offer. Call: BE-1632.

#### SUGGESTIVE DESCRIPTION:

Dear Mother:

We have found a place at last, and we love it, Jack just as much as I. I must tell you about it, so you can have some notion before you come to see us here. Well, you don't see it from the highway, for there is a high hedge with just a little gap that lets you into the lane, a winding lane among a grove of white oaks, like a lane going down to a pasture on somebody's farm, a million miles away from town. When you pass the oaks you see a dip down to a brook, lined with willows,

and a stone bridge, and just beyond the bridge the house on a slight rise. The house is white and trim, two stories, but rather low, just seeming to crop out of the ground. You have the feeling that once you cross that bridge and enter that door you'll be safe and sound and the world will never come to bother you.

When you do enter, you know that your feeling is right. There is a long room with a big fireplace, and windows to the east for the morning sun. It is a perfect room for the furniture which Grandmother left me, just the sort of room she would have loved, peaceful and old-fashioned. The instant you come in, you think of a fire crackling on the hearth, and a kettle humming to heat water for tea, and you see the copper glinting on the andirons. . . .

The motives behind the two pieces of description are very different. The seller of the house wants to give information about the house. The buyer of the house, writing to her mother, wants to give the feel, the atmosphere, of the house. (Note that we are here using the method of contrast, with illustrations, to drive home the difference between the two kinds of descriptions.)

The advertisement is an instance of technical description which is an analysis of the house. Except in so far as we know the general type of Cape Cod cottage, we have no basis for visualizing the actual house. The writer of the advertisement has not been concerned that we should get an impression of the house; the only attempt in this direction is his use of the word *sunny* about the dining room. But if the writer has not been concerned to give us the picture and atmosphere of his house, he has been greatly concerned to give us a systematic and complete body of information about the house considered from a technical point of view as a shelter and a mechanism for living.

In the excerpt from the letter above, however, the situation is reversed. The writer is concerned to make an appeal to her reader's senses, to establish the impression of the house, its quietness and isolation, its old-fashioned charm. The details she has selected for comment all contribute to this impression. The suggestive description does not, as does the technical, give a systematic and relatively complete body of information concerning the object; it does not analyze the subject. Instead, it simply presents the details that support the sensory and emotional effect the writer wishes to communicate. [The technical description *tends* to be enumerative; the suggestive description *tends* to be selective and impressionistic.] ✓

In the above technical description a specific house is described. Sometimes, however, technical description analyzes the characteristics of a *type* and not a specific thing.

#### GENERALIZED DESCRIPTION:

Chestnut oak is the big tough-looking tree with bark in heavy ridges. At the bottom of the furrows between ridges, bark is cinnamon-red. Chestnut oak has largest acorns known on oaks —  $1\frac{1}{2}$  or even 2 inches. This is the acorn to roast and eat. It's the sweetest of all the northern oaks. Look for orange-brown twigs that are not round but angled in an interesting way. Name comes from resemblance to chestnut leaves — large ovals with wavy edges; one of the most beautiful of oak leaves.

— RUTHERFORD PLATT: *A Pocket Guide to the Trees*

This description is aimed at giving the characteristics of a species of oak. Note how different it is from an ordinary description of a particular tree one has known — the tree at the corner of the yard, shading childhood play, or the tree on the ridge blasted by lightning to a peculiar shape, weird in the moonlight.

#### *The developed analysis*

The two examples of technical description, the advertisement for the Cape Cod cottage and the description of the species of oak, are very brief. They are little more than unsystematic listings of parts. For their special purposes they may serve well enough, but many occasions for analysis demand more development and more system. [For one thing, we want to indicate the relation among the parts, to give an over-all concept of the thing analyzed.] Let us look at a paragraph from a book on fly-fishing, which begins an analysis of that sport:

Fly-fishing has three elements: equipment, knowledge of stream life, and presentation. The equipment centers on the artificial fly; the knowledge of stream life encompasses insects and trout; presentation is skill, acquired and magical, in presenting the fly to the trout. Fly-fishing argument, which is fabulous, revolves around the comparative value of these elements. — JOHN McDONALD: Introduction to *The Complete Fly Fisherman, The Notes and Letters of Theodore Gordon*

[This example differs from the two previous examples, we can readily see, by indicating systematically the relation among the elements. Though the excerpt does not develop this relation, it is nevertheless recognized, and that is the start of a good analysis. It is the relation among the parts which establishes the thing analyzed as a structure.

Not only should we establish the relation among the parts, but to make understanding easier for our reader or listener, we should

settle on some single governing idea by reference to which, for the purpose of the description, the parts can be charted. In the following passage the comparison of the heart to a pump gives us the basis for understanding the relation among the parts:

The heart is a complicated mechanism. Essentially it is a muscular pump composed of four chambers and their incoming and outgoing blood vessels. The action of these chambers is coordinated and controlled by an intricate nervous mechanism. The chambers are paired into a right half and a left half. The upper chamber on each side is called the auricle; the lower, the ventricle. Each auricle is separated from its ventricle by a muscular valve which permits the flow of blood downward but prevents the leakage of blood backward.

— LOUIS I. DUBLIN: *The Problem of Heart Disease*

### *Functional analysis*

[The kind of analysis we have been discussing thus far answers the question: "How is it put together?" A tree, we say, is composed of trunk, roots, branches, and leaves, attached to each other in a certain way. A radar set is composed of a modulator, a radio-frequency oscillator, an antenna with scanning mechanism, a receiver, and an indicator. But with the tree or the radar set (or almost anything else), as soon as we begin to explore the idea of the relation among parts, we come to another question: "How does it work?" It is not merely the parts, but the function of the parts in relation to a characteristic function of the whole thing that now concerns us. Explaining how the parts of anything relate to one another in action we may call *functional analysis*.]

In the passage about the heart the use of the comparison with a pump makes us think of the parts in action. If we continue the paragraph we see that the writer has moved from analysis of parts into functional analysis: What does the pump do?

Venous blood arriving from all parts of the body in the right auricle passes from the auricle through the valve into the right ventricle. It is then pumped through the pulmonary arteries to the lung where it is aerated. The blood then returns to the left auricle, passes down through the valve on that side into the left ventricle, whence it is pumped out through the aorta to be distributed to all parts of the body.

We might list and describe all the parts of a radar set, and this would give us a certain amount of information about radar. But to make a thorough analysis, we must say what function the parts perform. So the analysis goes something like this:

While the physical form of each of these components may vary widely from one kind of radar set to another, each radar must have the following complement of parts in order to function:

(1) The *modulator* is a device for taking power from the primary source (which may be the commercial power line, a special engine or motor-driven generator, or storage batteries) and forming suitable voltage pulses to drive the radio-frequency oscillator in its bursts of radio-frequency oscillations. In other words, it is the modulator which turns on the radio-frequency oscillator to oscillate violently for a millionth of a second or so, turns it off sharply, and keeps it in repose until time for the next burst.

(2) The *radio-frequency oscillator* is a vacuum tube of suitable design, or a group of such tubes, which will oscillate at the desired radio frequency and give the desired bursts of radio-frequency power when connected to the modulator. . . .

And so on, through all the components, with an explanation at each stage of the function of the part in the operation of the whole apparatus.

Here is a student theme analyzing the parts of an apparatus in relation to function:

#### HI-FI

Your hi-fi phonograph has to do three different and distinct things: It has to get the electric impulse off the record; to amplify that impulse, or signal; and to turn it into sound.

For the first operation you need a turntable and an arm—a tone arm it is called—which swings over the record on the turntable. This arm has at the end a pick-up cartridge, which presses the needle, or stylus, into the track on the record.

The most important requirement for a turntable is that it run at an exact speed for each type of record—78.26, or 45, or 33½ rpm—without any variation. If there is variation, you get changes in pitch “wowing” or “fluttering,” as the experts say.

The tone arm has to be balanced so that exactly the right pressure is always on the grooves of the disc, and the cartridge should always point directly down at the disc. Also the arm must swing without any friction. And it must move at an even rate.

Of the four types of cartridge, I prefer the magnetic type. It is called magnetic because the stylus is set in the end of a cantilever spring fastened at one end to a permanent magnet.

When it comes to the stylus, or needle, the most economical type to buy is the most expensive. Many styli will cut your records in a few playings. In the long run you will save money, and records, if you get a diamond stylus. It will cost you around ten dollars, but it will play five hundred to a thousand hours before it wears. It is about ten times better than a sapphire stylus.

For the second distinct operation of your rig you need an amplifier. The kind you get is determined by the answer to two questions: (1) How much power do you need? (2) How good is your other equipment? The power you need is based on the size of your room and the kind of speaker you have. If you haven't got enough power your music will be too soft, or if it gets loud the sound will be harsh and fuzzed. In other words, you won't have music. For ordinary purposes you should be safe with a thirty-watt amplifier.

Last are the speaker and box. The center of every ordinary speaker is a magnet and coil of wire. A current flows in through the coil and sets up an electromagnetic field, and this fluctuating field pulls across the steady magnetic field from the magnet, just as a bow pulls across the fiddle strings. Hence your music bounces out into the air. If you are a real hi-fi enthusiast, you can pay nearly a thousand dollars for this part of the rig.

You can buy some fancy housing for the speaker, too. But you can save a lot by building it yourself, and you will find the results equally good. In building mine, I discovered that the main thing is to get the enclosure firm enough. My enclosure is five feet long and two feet high and over a foot deep. It is glued and screwed together, with no nails (never use nails), and for added firmness it is fastened with long, heavy screws into the studs of the wall. I used fiber-glass stuffing for the box.

Do you like music? If you do, you had better leave hi-fi alone, because you will become so interested in the technical side that you will never listen to music any more. Like me, you will just listen to hi-fi.

This theme wavers somewhat in its intention. It is clear enough in distinguishing the parts and indicating their function, but it is not consistent in explaining the way the parts work. It does explain how the speaker works (the two magnetic fields, one like a bow the other like the fiddle strings), but it gives no explanation, for instance, of the operation of the cartridge. The result is that we do not get a clear notion of the over-all process involved.

### ■ *Application*

Write a theme of 500 words analyzing a mechanism, institution, or idea. In doing so, you should consider the following points:

- 1 Identify or define the structure to be analyzed.
- 2 Specify what principle of structure is to be considered.
- 3 Indicate the parts.
- 4 State what relations exist among the parts in reference to the principle of structure you have chosen.

The list of topics below may suggest a subject for your theme:

A regiment of infantry	A church
A university	A business organization
Nationalism	A football team
Morality	American sectionalism
The internal-combustion engine	A poem
A newspaper	A picture
A political party	True charity
A television set	A hospital
Radar	A helicopter
A telephone	A jet plane

### *Functional analysis and process*

[Thus far we have been putting the emphasis on the parts of a structure as explained by their characteristic function. That is, we have been concerned, by and large, with mechanism. But we may switch the emphasis to the analysis of a process. A process may involve a mechanism — the human heart or a legislature — but our chief concern will be with the stages of the process and not with the parts of the mechanism. The parts are interesting only in so far as they help explain the stages.

Functional analysis, then, is the method by which we distinguish the stages in a process which may be regarded as having a characteristic function or purpose.]

### *Expository narration*

[Once we are concerned with the stages of a process, we are dealing with a sequence of events in time. That is, we have narration, but narration used for an expository purpose.

As we can make a distinction between technical (or expository) description and ordinary description (page 82), so can we make one between *expository narration* and ordinary narration. Ordinary narration, as we shall see when we come to discuss it as a basic kind of discourse (in Chapter 8), is concerned with presenting an action. It aims to give the sense of the event as experienced, and it involves an appeal to the imagination. But narration may be employed merely to give information, to enlarge the understanding. If we give directions as to how to build a boat or make a cake, we are treating a sequence of events in time, and we are forced to use a form of narration.] If we tell how radar works, we are again using a kind of narration. An instructor in military history lecturing on

the First Battle of the Marne in World War I is concerned to make his class understand the stages of the event and the problems of tactics, but he is not necessarily concerned to bring the event into the imagination of his audience. So he, too, is using expository narration.

[By analogy with generalized description, we can see that when expository narration deals with a type of process or type of event, instead of a unique and particular event, we call it *generalized narration*.]

Let us glance at one of the simplest forms in which expository narration may be used, the giving of directions for a process. The following is a section from a handbook on repairing antique furniture.

#### GLUING FELT TO WOOD

You may occasionally wish to glue thin felt to wood as when replacing it in an old disk top. Other occasions are applying felt to a lamp base or to the bottom of legs of heavy furniture so that floors will not be scratched.

Thin felt for such purposes may usually be purchased in a variety of colors at department stores. The most popular colors are green and brown. Measure the size needed and buy a piece larger than required, as it may shrink somewhat when applied and the glue dries.

Use either the Synthetic Resin Waterproof Glue mixed a bit thick or Old Fashioned Glue as it comes from the container.

Proceed as follows:

(1) When the surface is prepared by removing any old glue, scratch or roughen it with coarse abrasive paper and clean off. Then apply a generous and even coat of the glue. Allow this to dry until it becomes very sticky and is not too liquid. Otherwise it might soak through the felt.

(2) Apply an oversize piece of felt to the surface starting on one side and laying it carefully in correct position with no wrinkles. The felt must overlap on all sides. The hands must be clean and free from dust.

(3) The felt must now be rolled or patted into the glue. This is best done with a photographer's roller. If a roller is not available, hold a lintless clean cloth around a small wood block and pat the entire surface. It is best not to rub it for fear of moving or stretching the felt.

(4) Allow to dry for 24 to 48 hours in a warm room.

(5) If the felt goes beyond the edges, trim off closely with sharp scissors. Should it be used on a piece such as a desk top which has a wood border around the surface to which it is applied, the excess felt material is best cut off with a safety razor blade against a straight



edge as a guide (A carpenter's large steel square is good for this purpose)

— RALPH PARSONS KINNEY *The Complete Book of Furniture Repair and Refinishing*<sup>4</sup>

This is a very clear and systematic account of the process. It has a single point — to tell us how felt is glued — and it never wavers from that intention. It is complete, it tells us everything we can reasonably want to know, assuming nothing on our part, not even that we know where to get the felt or what kind of glue is best. And it uses very simple language. Technical terms known only to expert cabinetmakers are not used, any amateur of furniture repairing can understand the directions given.

The organization is systematic. We note that the piece begins by stating the kind of situation that demands the process, then identifies the materials needed, and then, as the body of the passage, gives the process, stage by stage, in strict chronological order, except for occasional cautions or suggestions, for example, the caution to

/ have the hands clean and free from dust  
/ We see that the directions are little more than an expanded outline, a skeleton which is to be fleshed out, not by words but by the actual doing. But often we are concerned with the explanation of a process, not in order to carry it out but merely to satisfy curiosity and to enlarge the understanding. In such instances the strict schematic method used above will scarcely satisfy us or our readers. Some filling out is needed.<sup>1</sup>

Here is an account of the method of planting dark tobacco in Tennessee and Kentucky, written as part of an introduction to an American novel translated into French. The account is thus intended for a public that knows nothing of farming in those states and is expected to have only the casual interest provoked by the novel itself, certainly with no intention of going out and raising a crop.

The work begins in January when winter breaks a little and the soil thaws. On the sunny side of a patch of woodland where the soil is thick and rich, the farmer piles up some dry wood, mixed with a little green, on a space about twenty feet wide by fifty to a hundred feet long. At evening he sets fire to his big woodpile, and sometimes in a sort of ritual picnic all the family comes down to watch, for this is the beginning of a new year of work and hope. Next day the soil, mixed with the ashes of the bonfire, is turned up, pulverized and raked to prepare a bed for the little seeds of tobacco which the farmer then treads into the soil and ashes. Long ago the farmers used to place

<sup>4</sup>From *The Complete Book of Furniture Repair and Refinishing* by Ralph Parsons Kinney. By permission of Charles Scribner's Sons.

boughs over the bed to protect it, but in later times they stretch over the bed, on a frame, a cheap white cloth, very light, called canvas, light enough to allow sun and rain to come through. In this protected bed the fragile plant of tobacco develops until the time when it will be replanted in the open field.

The time of setting out the plants comes in May or June. The farmer has prepared his field. He has plowed and harrowed the soil to pulverize it as perfectly as possible, and he has laid it out in squares. When the rain comes and the soil is well soaked — that is to say, when the farmer gets what he calls a “season” — the tender plants are drawn from the bed. Now every available person turns out, women and children, to carry the plants in baskets across the field, letting one fall at the exact center of each square. Behind the “droppers,” the women and children with the baskets of plants, come the men, the “setters,” who with one hand pick up the plant and with the other drive a sharpened stake of wood, called a “dibble,” into the earth to make a hole for the plant. The setter presses down the damp earth around the plant, and without straightening up, takes another step forward, to the next square and the nearest plant. This setting out process is a grinding work: in May or June, the sun of Kentucky is already powerful, and you can’t interrupt yourself, even to straighten an aching back, for every moment is precious as long as the soil is damp enough to receive the plant.

Here the writer has tried to fill out the skeleton of the account with just enough material — the family coming down to watch the fire, the heat of the sun, the aching back, and so on — to make the French reader have some immediate sense of the process. In other words, there are certain elements in the passage that belong to suggestive narration or description. But the intention here is primarily expository — to analyze the process of tobacco setting for the French reader.

### ■ *Application*

Below is a list of possible subjects for themes, some that may well be treated as directions, some more properly adapted to the account of a process to satisfy curiosity. Select one of the subjects that interests you (or think up one of your own). First decide whether your subject suggests a particular or generalized form of narration. The two examples given above are generalized: the directions for gluing felt are, of course, supposed to be applicable in general, as is the account of setting tobacco. But if you take “How I Shot My First Deer,” you will be explaining a specific event.

If you are giving a generalized treatment, you must remember that you are trying to present the essential pattern that never varies significantly from one instance to another. If you are giving the explanation of an event — for instance, the last football game — you are concerned with its particularity and must make clear why you won or lost under the *special* circumstances.

Having decided whether you are concerned with a particular or general treatment, make your outline, breaking the process or event down into its stages, in chronological order. Then write a short theme, say about 500 words, to develop the outline. Remember that you are supposed to be giving information to a person relatively ignorant of the subject, that you should leave nothing of consequence to his surmise, and remember, too, if you are writing directions, to include any appropriate cautions or suggestions. But always stick to your main point; do not let your cautions or suggestions lead you away from it.

The curing of tobacco

Assault from the sea

The production line

How to use a library

Pigeon raising

How wheat is marketed

A chemical experiment

Putting on a student play

(or a particular play)

How I shot my first deer

Baking an apple pie

Registration day

A charity drive

How the news story gets  
on the front page

How to lay out a vegetable  
garden

Organizing a dance

A beaver dam

Last Saturday's football game

### / Causal analysis

/ { In dealing with some processes we often want to go beyond a mere account of the stages in time sequence. When we want to see what makes one stage lead to another, we make a *causal analysis*.

Causal analysis concerns two questions: "What caused this?" and "Given this set of circumstances, what effect will follow?" In answering the first question we must reason from effect back to cause, and in answering the second, from cause forward to effect. Causal analysis usually takes the form of expository narration. We are accustomed to think of cause and effect in a time sequence, as a chain of happenings.

## *Cause*

We all have a rough-and-ready notion of what cause is. Some understanding of cause is necessary to manage our daily lives. The burnt child shuns the fire only after he has learned that a certain act, putting his finger in the flame, is followed by a certain unpleasant effect, a burn. He has made a connection between events.

[Cause is a kind of connection between events that enables us to say, (1) without event *A*, event *B* would not have come about, or (2) whenever you have *A* you will have *B*.]

## *Condition*

No event takes place in isolation. It always involves a complicated set of circumstances spreading in all directions. Let us look at a simple experiment. To a rod is attached a little bell. The rod, in turn, is attached to an electric mechanism which will make it sway back and forth when a button is pushed. The whole affair, except the control button, is rigged up in a hermetically sealed jar connected with a vacuum pump. Somebody pushes the button, the rod sways, the bell rings. We hear the sound of the bell. What is the cause of the sound?

One person says it is caused by the clapper striking the inside of the bell. Another says it is caused by the movement of the rod. Another says: "No, Jack pushed the button." And common sense tells us that everybody is right and everybody is wrong. In each case the person answering has fixed on some particular factor and assumed the other factors.

How much assumption is involved in our talk about cause we can see more clearly if we pump the air entirely out of the jar, and then push the button. The mechanism works, the bell clapper strikes metal, but there is no sound. We know why. For sound to exist, there must be a medium, in this instance air, in which the sound waves can travel.

The first three people who specified a cause for the sound forgot all about the necessity for a medium for the sound waves. But now a fourth person says: "Ah, it was the air that caused the sound." Again, he is both right and wrong, as common sense will tell us. All the factors had to be there — the bell, the clapper striking it, the mechanism, the person pushing the button, the air for the waves.

Other circumstances are also present: the bell, for example, is brass, not steel; the electric wires have red insulation; and so on. But the particular kind of metal, or the color of insulation, has no

necessary effect on the existence of the sound: steel would do for the bell, and the insulation might as well be blue. We are concerned with the principle of the mechanism, not its accidental features.

[Any necessary factor, any factor that must be present for the event to take place, we shall call a *condition*.]

### *Immediate connection*

[The world may be thought of as an enormously complex texture of conditions for any single event. We, however, are concerned with the more or less *immediate connection* between an event and its conditions.] Certainly, the birth of a grandfather may be in the long range a condition of the death of a grandson, for without the old man's birth the boy would never have existed, and so forth. But that connection is not immediate enough to be very instructive to us.

### *Cause and interest*

[Among the conditions that have a more or less immediate connection with an event, how do we determine what is to be taken as a cause? In one way we must say that our special interest determines what condition is to be taken as cause.]

Let us take the case of the death of the grandson. We have ruled out the condition of the birth of the grandfather because of its lack of immediate connection. But let us sort out some immediate conditions. When the little boy falls from the stepladder and is killed, a neighbor commenting on the event would probably be satisfied by the fact of the fall from the ladder as the cause. But the mother might take her own carelessness as the cause: She had left the stepladder standing on the edge of the back porch instead of putting it away in the closet where it belonged. Or a doctor might take a more scientific view of the cause and say that death was the result of a fracture of the skull.

In relation to the special interest brought to bear on the event, each of these statements may be true. [It is important, however, to know what we are about when we select a particular line of interest to explain an event. From a group of conditions with more or less immediate connection with the event in question, we select the cause that is appropriate to our interest. But we must select it responsibly.]

### *Reasoning about cause*

We can deal responsibly with cause only if we are aware of certain principles. Let us look at a passage by Leo Tolstoy:

Whenever I see the movement of a locomotive I hear the whistle and see the valves opening and wheels turning; but I have no right to conclude that the whistling and the turning of wheels are the cause of the movement of the engine.

The peasants say that a cold wind blows in late spring because the oaks are budding, and really every spring cold winds do blow when the oak is budding. But I do not know what causes the cold winds to blow when the oak buds unfold, I cannot agree with the peasants that the unfolding of the oak buds is the cause of the cold wind, for the force of the wind is beyond the influence of the buds. I see only a coincidence of occurrences such as happens with all the phenomena of life, and I see that however much and however carefully I observe . . . the valves and wheels of the engine, and the oak, I shall not discover the cause of . . . the engine moving, or of the winds of spring. To do that I must entirely change my point of view and study the laws of the movement of steam . . . and of the wind.

—LEO TOLSTOY: *War and Peace*

[The fact that something is merely associated with something else in time does not mean that it is to be regarded as either cause or effect. In fact, one of the most common failures in reasoning about cause and effect is the assumption that if something comes after something else it is to be regarded as the effect.] The Russian peasants in Tolstoy's novel think the cold wind is the effect of the budding of the oak because it comes after it. [To avoid such an error, we must try to find the essential characteristic in the situation that we are studying.] The color of the insulation on the electric wire, we remember, is not relevant.

### *Uniformity*

[Not only must we try to see what conditions are relevant; if we are to reason well about cause, we must also understand the principle of uniformity.

When we say that *A* is the cause of *B*, we are not merely referring to the particular case of a particular *A* and a particular *B*. We are also implying that a general principle exists, that under the same circumstances any *A* would cause a *B*. We imply a principle of uniformity behind the particular case.

Uniformity is the principle involved in what we call a law of nature.] A chemist says that when we ignite hydrogen in the presence of oxygen we will get water ( $H_2O$ ). Under specified conditions the element hydrogen and the element oxygen always behave in the same way. At least, we believe that they will so behave because they have always behaved that way in the past. We appeal to experience and to a number of instances for our principle.

[The principle of uniformity, we must remember, refers only to the essential characteristics of the situation.] For instance, it does not matter whether the laboratory worker igniting hydrogen in the presence of oxygen is a Catholic or a Jew, a Republican or a Democrat, a Chinese or a Greek. [The boy who, in Charles Lamb's essay, accidentally discovered how to roast a pig by burning down a house, had not isolated the essential characteristic of the situation: he had not learned that he did not need to burn down a house every time he wanted roast pig. He had not isolated the essential characteristic of fire by which to roast meat.]

[In the laboratory a scientist can control the circumstances of his experiments and repeat them over and over, without variation. But outside the laboratory it is difficult to control circumstances with any certainty, and many events that we want to explain — for instance, a political election — cannot be repeated at will and identically. When we want to understand the causes of an event which we cannot repeat, we must simply examine similar events, that is, the various political elections we know about, and try to make sense of them. We must try, in other words, to see what is uniform in them that can lead to the discovery of a cause. When we try to find the cause of a particular effect, we must look for uniformities beyond the particular situation.]

### *Complex cause*

[Even in an ordinary, simple event — the bell ringing in the jar, say — we find, as we have pointed out, a number of conditions which may be taken to have causal relation to the event. Many events are, however, enormously more complicated than our experiment. In any situation, but especially in a complicated one, we must be sure that when we select one condition as a cause we are not taking that single condition to be a total cause. It may be something that we can talk about legitimately in the terms of our special interest as a cause, as, for instance, when the doctor says that the fracture of the skull, and not the mother's carelessness or the fall from the ladder, caused the boy's death. But we must be very careful not to treat such a cause as *the* explanation, *the* cause. If we are trying to determine, in so far as such a thing is possible, *the* cause of an event, we must try to see the relations among the various conditions which might be selected as causes. We must aim for a complete picture.]

For instance, if a certain business firm failed in 1932, should we take as *the* explanation someone's statement that its failure was caused by the incompetence of the chairman of the board? Or are

we willing to accept the idea that the firm was merely the victim of the depression? Or can the failure be blamed on the Republican party, then in power? Or can we say that technological advances made the failure inevitable?

### *Negative tests*

[There are two handy, rule-of-thumb tests to apply when trying to determine cause:

1. *A* cannot be the cause of *B* if *A* is ever absent in any instance when *B* is present.
2. *A* cannot be the cause of *B* if *B* is ever absent in any instance when *A* is present.]

### *A last caution*

In the foregoing discussion of cause many of the ideas have probably struck the student as familiar. He does know these ideas. He has been making judgments of cause and effect all his life — in fishing and hunting, in games, in gardening, in laboratory work, in crossing the street. Being acquainted with the ideas, however, is not quite enough. One must make a practice of applying them systematically to a situation. If the student can think straight about a problem of cause and effect, then it will be easy for him to write well about it. And to think straight, he must be systematic in applying ideas.

## ■ *Applications*

- I Read the following passage by a noted scientist, Robert A. Millikan:

When in 1825 my grandfather loaded into a covered wagon his young wife, his Lares and Penates, and all his worldly goods, and trekked west from Stockbridge, Massachusetts, first to the Western Reserve in Ohio, and again in 1838 to the banks of the Rock River in western Illinois, the conditions of that migration, the motives prompting it, the mode of travel of the immigrants, their various ways of meeting their needs and solving their problems, their whole outlook on life, were extraordinarily like those which existed four thousand years earlier when Abraham trekked westward from Ur of the Chaldees. In a word, the changes that have occurred within the past hundred years, not only in the external conditions under which the average man, at least in this Western world, passes his life on earth, but in his superstitions, such as the taboo on the number



thirteen or on Friday sailings (why, my own grandmother carried a dried potato in her pocket to keep off rheumatism), in his fundamental belief, in his philosophy, in his concept of religion, in his whole world-outlook, are probably greater than those that occurred during the preceding four thousand years all put together. Life seems to remain static for thousands of years and then to shoot forward with amazing speed. The last century has been one of those periods of extraordinary change, the most amazing in human history.

If, then, you ask me to put into one sentence the cause of that recent, rapid, and enormous change and the prognosis for the achievement of human liberty, I should reply, *It is found in the discovery and utilization of the means by which heat energy can be made to do man's work for him.* The key to the whole development is found in the use of power machines, and it is a most significant statistical fact that the standard of living in the various countries of the world follows closely the order in which so-called labor saving devices have been most widely put to use. In other words, the average man has today more of goods and services to consume in about the proportion in which he has been able to produce more of goods and services through the aid of power machines which have been put into his hands. In this country there is now expended about 13.5 horsepower per day per capita — the equivalent of 100 human slaves for each of us; in England, the figure is 6.7, in Germany 6.0, in France 4.5, in Japan 1.8, in Russia 0.9, in China 0.5. In the last analysis, this use of power is why our most important social changes have come about. This is why we no longer drive our ships with human slaves chained to the oars, as did the Romans and the Greeks. This is why we no longer enslave whole peoples, as did the Pharaohs, for building our public structures and lash them to their tasks. This is why ten times as many boys and girls are in the high schools today in the United States as were there in 1890 — more than five million now, half a million then. This is why we have now an eight-hour day instead of, as then, a ten-, twelve-, or sometimes a fourteen-hour day. This is why we have on the average an automobile for every family in the country. This is why the lowest class of male labor, i.e., unskilled labor, gets nearly twice as much in real wages in the United States as in England, three times as much as in Germany or France, and thirteen times as much as in Russia, and this is why the most abused class of labor in the world, domestic service, is even better off relatively in this country, though completely unorganized, i.e., through the unhampered operation of economic laws, than is any other class of labor, skilled or unskilled, in other countries. — ROBERT A. MILLIKAN: "Science, Freedom and the World of Tomorrow," in *Freedom: Its Meaning*<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> From *Freedom: Its Meaning*, edited by Ruth Nanda Anshen, copyright, 1949, by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

- 1 Point out the causal analysis in this selection. Has Millikan avoided the errors discussed earlier in this chapter (see pages 94-97)? Explain.
  - 2 Even while Dr. Millikan wrote this essay, "whole peoples" were being enslaved by countries which possessed modern machines. What caused such enslavement in Germany or Russia? How deeply does this affect his general conclusion?
- II You are going to be asked to write a theme in causal analysis, but before you begin, here is an example of a student theme to consider. It is not complete; it is only the first part of a long research theme. But the writer has chosen a subject involving causal analysis. (The footnotes proper to a research theme are here dropped out. We will take up the problems of the research paper in Chapters 13 and 14.)

#### CAUSES OF THE TEXAS REVOLUTION

I was born and raised in Texas, and in fact never left the State until I came here to college. I suppose I have my share of Texas patriotism, but I don't take it out in wearing high-heel boots. Instead, I have a hobby of reading Texas history. The Texas revolution, which made Texas into an independent nation, as Texans have a sneaking feeling Texas still is, was a very romantic thing. But I have read enough history to know that it was not only romantic. It was also very complicated. In this paper, I am going to try to sort out the causes leading up to it.

I intend to do three things: First, to list the causes of the Texas revolution and define each one. Second, to show how these causes combined to bring about the revolution. Third, to sort out the causes in some order of importance. I shall list and define the causes first, then try to tell the story, and then, by way of a conclusion, line them up in importance, or what to me seems to be their importance.

The first cause was simply the difference in civilization between the Mexicans who owned Texas and the Americans who came there. I don't mean the amount of civilization; I mean in the *kind* of civilization. The Mexicans had a Spanish and Catholic civilization, and they believed in power and authority and tradition. The Americans believed in democracy and self-reliance. You might say that this difference was the thing underlying all the trouble that followed. But perhaps it would not have been enough of a thing to make the revolution if certain other things had not been the way they were.

The second cause was the fact that the Mexicans couldn't get rid of a fear of American adventurers coming in to seize Texas. There had been a lot of adventurers coming in to filibuster far back in the Spanish times, and the Mexicans didn't really trust the Americans

that they themselves invited in and who took out citizenship and honestly tried to be good and loyal Mexicans.

The third cause is related to the second. There were a good many adventurers in Texas, and you might go so far as to say that some of the leaders, like Sam Houston, were adventurers and were seeking to take Texas from Mexico.

The fourth cause was bad Mexican policy and administration. After they had called in American settlers to develop the country they couldn't develop and fight off the Indians they hadn't been able to control, the Mexican government turned around and tried to block the prosperity of these people. They used heavy custom duties, passed laws to prevent further immigration, and failed to establish coastwise trade with Mexico proper.

The fifth cause was violation of civil rights when a dictatorship was set up, the sending in of troops to hold down the people, sometimes convict troops, and Santa Anna's flinging Austin into jail.

Another cause was the United States policy in trying to buy Texas. The United States government had very bad judgment in the choice of diplomats. A man like Butler tried to bribe high Mexican officials and wrote anonymous letters to stir up rebellion.

It was the big financial panic of 1819 that drove so many Americans to Texas, especially frontiersmen of Kentucky and Tennessee. The self-reliance of the frontiersman was . . .

Although this theme is unimaginative in style, it has the virtue of a systematic organization. The writer's concern with being systematic makes this theme useful here. The student can see another writer wrestling with the problem of organization, and basically the way the writer of the theme solves his problem is sensible. The difficulty is merely that he is somewhat awkward in applying the solution.

For your own theme in causal analysis you may take some historical event that you already know something about or an event that you have observed or experienced. Suppose that you have heard about an automobile accident which involved several friends coming home from a dance. One of the friends, whom you know very well, was driving. He had a quarrel with his date and was in a surly mood. To spite her, he had taken a few drinks. On the way home he drove very fast, and, in passing, he side-swiped another car and catapulted into a ditch. He and his date were seriously hurt. The others in the car suffered only slight injury. You make the following list: There was a wet road. The car being passed wavered a little. Your friend was exceeding the speed limit and common sense. He had been drinking, and he was not used to drinking. Your

friend has a short temper, but ordinarily comes out of anger very quickly and apologetically. The girl had made him angry by teasing him. When he got angry, she didn't laugh it off. Your friend's father was a very short-tempered man who had never controlled himself around his children. When the father lost his temper, the mother made the situation worse by being sullen and resentful. The mother had spoiled your friend. And so on. You know many of the facts of the situation. Your job is to sort them out and try to find out where the responsibility lies.

The topics listed below may help you get a subject for your theme:

Why we lost to State  
Why I failed algebra  
He says he had to learn  
to be a good father  
A triumph of character  
over circumstance  
Why Benedict Arnold became  
a traitor

Was it bad luck or good?  
Men (Women) don't make  
good drivers  
My aunt's character  
What caused the Great  
Depression?  
The automobile changed  
American life

## Chapter Six

### Argument

College students, like everybody else, spend a good part of their time arguing. Every time you try to prove a point to a friend, or support an opinion in class, or decide with your friends what to do Saturday night, you are using argument. Argument appears in conversation, in public addresses, in a lawyer's presentation of his case, in feature articles in magazines, in textbooks, in essays, in poetry, in editorials, in drama, in fiction. The salesman trying to sell a car uses argument. The historian trying to prove that a certain event took place at a certain time uses argument. The congressman speaking on behalf of a bill uses argument.

Argument, like the other forms of discourse, does not always appear in a pure form. It is often mixed with other forms, especially exposition. Indeed, the mere exposition of facts will sometimes settle an argument. In this chapter, however, we shall study the methods that belong strictly to argument, and only incidentally notice how other forms of discourse may be used in conjunction with it.

[How does argument differ from other forms of discourse? It differs in its initial motivation. An argument starts in conflict.] People, in good humor or bad humor, disagree. If they try to settle the disagreement by words, an argument begins. We do not argue with a person who already agrees with us. We do not argue about a subject if only one position can possibly be taken in regard to it. The arguer presumably believes that his own position is the right one, but by the fact of arguing at all he recognizes that another position may be held, no matter how mistakenly.

The purpose of argument is to make another person "change his

mind." [It aims to resolve the conflict, the disagreement, in which the argument originates.]

### *Argument and reason*

[How may argument resolve the original disagreement? By an appeal to reason, for argument aims to show that one opinion is correct and that the opposing opinion is not.] We ordinarily recognize this fact of the appeal to reason when we say of a speaker, "He didn't really have an argument; he merely carried the audience by appealing to their emotions." The speaker has persuaded, but he has not convinced. The advertiser who puts the picture of an attractive young woman beside the picture of his refrigerator is not appealing to reason but to emotion. He may have a good sales argument in favor of his refrigerator on grounds of economy, efficiency, or convenience, but he is not presenting it. The political speaker who screams, "Every red-blooded American will vote for John Jones, the friend of the people!" is not offering an argument any more than the defense lawyer who points to the accused murderer and, with sobs in his voice, demands of the jury, "This man before you, this simple man who loves his children, who prays for them every night — would you send him to the gallows? You fathers and mothers, would you make those poor babes fatherless?" [The advertiser may actually sell the refrigerator, the politician may actually get the votes, the lawyer may actually get an acquittal for the accused by the appeal to the emotions, but in no case has an argument been offered.]

The objection may be raised: "What does it matter if the advertiser or politician or lawyer didn't offer an argument? The refrigerator *was* good — or the politician *was* honest and able — or the accused *was* innocent." If the refrigerator was worth buying, then the question is merely a practical one: "Is the simple appeal to the emotions the best and safest way of achieving the good purpose?" Perhaps not; for if a person becomes aware that no real argument is being offered, that there is only an attempt to play on his emotions, he may feel that he is being treated like a child, that proper respect is not being paid to his powers of reason, that he is being duped and betrayed. So the appeal to the emotions may backfire, and regardless of the merits of the case there may be blind resentment instead of blind agreement.

But another objection may be raised: "Suppose that the advertiser or politician or lawyer did gain his purpose, no matter what

the merit of the case. He won, didn't he? And isn't the object to win?" If the refrigerator was not good, the question now becomes a moral one: "Is a man entitled to practice a fraud merely because he has the ability to do so — in this instance, to sway people by the appeal to the emotions?" (The same question would apply if the man did not simply appeal to the emotions of his audience but offered them misleading arguments.) This question must be answered by each individual in accordance with his personal standards.

If argument appeals to reason, then what becomes of the appeal to the emotions which occurs in many arguments? Nothing becomes of it. It is still a very important consideration in argument. If we have a good case on logical grounds, we may still lose it because we present it untactfully, because we do not know how to make the most of the temperament and attitude of the audience. Frequently the problem may be to "persuade" the audience to give our logical case an examination. Persuasion is very important in the strategy of argument, and at the end of this chapter we shall discuss it. But for the present we shall consider questions arising from the consideration of argument as an appeal to reason.

Therefore, in this chapter we shall be concerned with the principles of reasoning. With many of these principles we are already acquainted, and in so far as we have been able to think straight up to now we have been thinking in accordance with them. The principles are not rules imposed on our minds. They are, in fact, the way our minds work naturally when they are working well. But if we study the principles systematically, we shall be able to use them more readily; that is, we shall be able to think more clearly, not only in argument but in all other ways.

### *Argument and the common ground*

We have said that argument originates in conflict. We have also said that it appeals to reason, and this statement implies that the conflict will be settled by reason. We know, for instance, that now and then, when we aren't too stubborn or resentful, we change our minds in the middle of an argument. We may even pride ourselves on being fair-minded enough to submit to reason when reason is presented to us — even when we have been in the wrong. And certainly, when we are thinking something over privately, are balancing off the *pro's* and the *con's* of a question, are "arguing with ourselves," we are trying to be reasonable. In other words, we assume that argument, to be significant, must take place among reasonable men; or if we are arguing with ourselves, that it must take place in

the mind of a reasonable person. [Argument, though it originates in disagreement, in a situation of conflict between persons, opinions, or possibilities, may, from this point of view, be considered not as a matter of antagonisms, but as an effort to find truth — or at least the “reasonable thing.”]

Thus, although there is disagreement at the beginning of argument, there is also implied agreement — the agreement to follow the dictates of reason. To convince someone means, then, to find a *common ground in reason, to find a standard of reason.*]

Suppose that a Mr. Brown has strong anti-Semitic views and a Mr. Smith is arguing with him. Now the fact that they are arguing at all indicates, as we have said, that they accept, momentarily anyway, a common ground in reason. But clearly, in the conversation below, Mr. Smith is trying to find a more specific common ground, a starting point, to work from. [Argument must have a starting point. If there is no starting point possible, argument is not possible. There remains only the resort to force if a question is to be resolved.]

SMITH Look here, I know how you feel. but I'm just curious to know how it squares with your other views. It just doesn't seem consistent with what I know about you.

BROWN What do you mean?

SMITH Well, just the way you manage your affairs, the way you treat people.

BROWN What's that got to do with it?

SMITH Well, nobody ever said you aren't a straight shooter, or don't believe in justice, or any of these things. Like that time when you —

BROWN That hasn't got anything to do with it.

SMITH You don't deny that you believe in people getting justice.

BROWN Sure, I don't deny that, but —

Smith has tried to locate the more common ground in the notion of justice. He has made Brown admit that he has a notion of justice. Now he has the job of making Brown see what justice would mean in a given situation. That may be a hard job, but at least there is a starting point in the common agreement that justice is desirable. But suppose that Brown denies that he is interested in justice:

BROWN Look here, I know justice is all right, by and large. But, buddy, this is a tough world, and a man's got to look out for himself. He's got to watch his interests.

SMITH O.K., let's forget that justice stuff. A man's got to watch his own interests. That's right. It's a good practical point of view.

BROWN I'm a practical man.

SMITH Well, the question just boils down to what a man's interests are, doesn't it?



BROWN Sure.

SMITH Now on the Jewish question, maybe our interests aren't as simple as they sometimes seem —

Smith has here dropped the common ground of justice and accepted the common ground of practical self-interest. Now his job is to show that in the light of self-interest anti-Semitism may be a shortsighted policy in any society. Again, he may not convince his friend, but at least he has a starting point.

[When we are sure about our common grounds, we can say to our readers or listeners: "We disagree about the question before us, but we really agree on a more important question than this one, on something that lies deeper. And since we do agree on that deeper question, I can show you that we ought reasonably to agree on the present question."] We may not say this in so many words, but it is what we mean to convey.

## WHAT IS ARGUMENT ABOUT?

[We can begin to answer the question of what argument is about by showing some things it *cannot* reasonably be about.] To illustrate:

John comes upon a group obviously engaged in a heated argument and asks: "What are you arguing about?"

JACK Football!

JOHN What about football?

JACK About who won the Army-Navy game in 1936.

JOHN (*laughs*): You idiots, what are you wasting your breath for? Why don't you telephone the information bureau at the newspaper and find out?

John is right; they are idiots. [When a fact can be readily established by investigation, there is no *need* for argument. Why argue about the length of a piece of string if there is a ruler handy?]

Or, again, suppose that John asks his first question, and Jack replies, "Football."

JOHN What about football?

JACK Which is the better game, football or basketball?

JOHN (*laughs*): For the Lord's sake, what are you wasting your breath for? You can't settle that. A guy just likes the game he likes. Take me, I like tennis better than either of them.

John is right again. [An argument about a matter of mere taste is useless, and in so far as the word "better" in the above conversation

merely means what one happens to like, there is no proper matter for argument.

In other words, a matter of absolute taste is not a matter for argument, and only a matter of judgment is a matter for argument. We must remember, however, that there is no sharp line between matters of taste and matters of judgment. In between the obvious extremes is a vast body of questions about which it is difficult to be sure. Each such question must be examined on its own merits.]

Let us come back to our original illustrations. We note that in both instances when Jack says that he and his friends are arguing about football, John asks: "What about football?"

John is bound to ask this question if he has any real curiosity about the argument.

JACK Oh, about the Michigan-Purdue game last Saturday.

JOHN Gosh, but you are thick-headed. What *about* the game?

JACK About Randall and Bolewinsky.

JOHN Well, I give up!

John is outdone by his friend's stupidity because he knows that one can't reasonably argue about something just in general — *about* the game, for instance, or *about* Randall and Bolewinsky. So John now says: "What about Randall and Bolewinsky?"

JACK About which is the more useful player.

JOHN Well it's sure time you were telling me.

John's thick-headed friend has finally managed to state what the argument is about. If there is an argument here, somebody holds that Randall is a more useful player than Bolewinsky and somebody denies it. In other words, [the argument is about a *proposition*.] And a proposition is the declaration of a judgment, what the arguer holds to be a reasonable judgment. It can be believed, doubted, or disbelieved.]

### *The statement of the proposition*

[A proposition is, simply, the declaration of a judgment. A proposition is what an argument is about, and it is the only thing an argument can be about.] We all know that in formal debates the proposition is given as a formal resolution. For instance: *Resolved*, That the United States should adopt free trade. Or: *Resolved*, That the language requirement for the B.A. degree should be abolished. In such circumstances the nature of the proposition is obvious.

But formal debates make up a very small fraction of all argu-

ment. [Ordinarily the proposition underlying an argument is not formally stated or sometimes may not be stated at all. If we want to think straight, however, and want to be effective in argument, we ought to be able to state whatever proposition underlies our argument. We must know what is at stake, and the best way to know that is to frame the proposition, at least for ourselves.]

When we come to writing a theme in argumentation, we shall find that the proposition provides our subject. If we don't know what the proposition is, we shall be floundering or wandering; the theme will lack point and unity; it will have poor organization. Even if argument is only a subordinate part of a theme that is primarily expository, descriptive, or narrative, we should make sure that we can state the proposition which constitutes the interest in that part of the theme.]

### *The proposition: two kinds*

[A proposition states one of two things. It states that something is a fact, or it states that something should be done.] When a lawyer argues that his client has an alibi, he is dealing with a proposition of fact: the client was at a certain place at a certain time — or so the lawyer declares. When a bond salesman tries to sell a bond to an investor, he is dealing with a proposition of action: the investor would be wise to buy the bond — or so the salesman says. We should keep this distinction in mind; for, as we shall see, [one kind of proposition demands a different method of arguing from the other.] [In a proposition of fact, you have only to establish the key fact in so far as possible. In the proposition of action, you have to work from the establishing of facts to the desirability of action.]

### *The clear proposition*

[A proposition must clearly state the fact or action it proposes. It is not always easy to state matters clearly. For one thing, most words, as we ordinarily use them, do not have very precise limits. Even words which refer to an objective, physical situation may be vague. How "tall" is a tall man? Five feet eleven? Six feet? Six feet three?] Any of these men is well above average height, but should all be considered "tall"? We may use "tallish," "tall," and "very tall" to indicate the scale; but even then we might hesitate about the choice of a word. Or take the word "bald." How much hair must be lacking before we can say that a man is bald? The word

does not fix an objective standard, although it does refer to an objective situation.

[The problem is even more complicated when we come to such words as "good," "cute," or "progressive," which do not refer to easily measurable attributes.] If we hear, "Mr. Black is a progressive citizen," what are we to understand? That Black works hard, pays his taxes, treats his family decently, saves money, and stays out of jail? Or that he is interested in improving the local school, bringing new factories to town, and planting flowers in the park? Or that he has a certain political philosophy? The word seems to indicate some general approval on the part of the speaker, but we do not know exactly what, and the odds are that he does not know either. The word is vague.

[Many words, like "progressive," have no generally accepted meaning to which we can refer.] Even the dictionary does not help us much with such a word. It can give us a generally accepted meaning for a word like "horse," since a horse is a horse wherever we find it. For a word like "progressive," the dictionary may give us several more or less well-accepted senses and may start us on the way to a clear statement, but the dictionary definition can rarely be full enough to cover the meaning of the word as it will appear in an argument. [In framing a proposition we should try to fix the definition (pages 42-58) of any significant word, to determine exactly what we mean by it. Then we should stick to that definition.]

## ■ Applications

1 Study the following propositions with these questions in mind:

- a Which are propositions of fact and which are propositions of desirable action?
- b Are any vague? If so, discuss the difficulty.
- c Are any nonarguable — mere matters of taste, for instance?
  - 1 A good book is the best friend a man can have.
  - 2 No good Democrat will vote for a Republican.
  - 3 Mussolini was a great man.
  - 4 Square dancing is more interesting than ballroom dancing.
  - 5 Edison was a greater man than Napoleon.
  - 6 Good citizens of the United States ought to support the United Nations.
  - 7 Amateur athletics are more desirable than professional athletics.

- 8 Capital punishment is not a deterrent to crime.
- 9 The atomic bomb is the most important invention since the steam engine.

II Frame (1) an unclear proposition and (2) a properly stated proposition for each of five of the following topics:

United Nations	Intoxicants
Hobbies	Tennis
Religion	Reading habits
Motherhood	Profession of medicine
War	Foreign missions

### *The single proposition*

[An argument, like any theme, must have a main point if it is to make sense. That main point is what the proposition of the argument should state, and the proposition should state only the *main* point. There may, of course, be minor points related to the main point, but each of these has to be argued singly; and each point must be considered to represent the declaration of a judgment, to be, in other words, a proposition — though a subsidiary one.]

Here is the first paragraph of a student theme which illustrates the looseness and poor organization one is likely to fall into when trying to argue more than one proposition at a time.

#### NATIONAL FRATERNITIES SHOULD BE ABOLISHED HERE IN FAVOR OF DINING CLUBS

One of the bad features about national fraternities is that there is a financial drain on the members for no good purpose. I have never been able to see where the money goes except to pay some fellow to be national secretary, and most likely he is somebody who hasn't grown up enough to quit being a fraternity man and campus big-shot all his life. My father was a member of the same fraternity I am a pledge of, but he says, "Son, when you get that old sheepskin on graduation day, you just lose that frat pin till your fiftieth class reunion." Dining clubs have certain good features of the same kind as fraternities. They can give fun and companionship and a place in which to hang out and argue and hold bull sessions. And there is no reason why they shouldn't have athletic teams for intramural games and give dances and parties. But the fact that fraternities are national gives a spirit of competition that isn't very healthy in some ways. I don't mean in games, which is all right, but in social showing off and feeling bigger than you have a right to. There is no reason why dining clubs

shouldn't have their own libraries, too, and the same pride in their members who amount to something on the campus. [Etc.]

There are really two propositions to be argued here: (1) the desirability of abolishing national fraternities, and (2) the desirability of establishing dining clubs. These are quite separate notions, as we can readily see if we remember that dining clubs are not the only alternative to fraternities. Each proposition should be argued on its own merits.

A more systematic way of going about things would be to argue first the need for a change. What is wrong with the present system that makes the author dissatisfied with it? Then after establishing the need for a change, one might consider the dining club, as compared with other possibilities and with fraternities, asking perhaps the following questions: (1) "Would dining clubs avoid the defects of fraternities?" (2) "Would they introduce new defects of their own?" (3) "How do we weigh these considerations?" But each topic should be considered individually, in sequence.

What all this amounts to is this:

- [ 1. The fact that two ideas appear in one sentence does not mean that they are one proposition. They are still two.
- 2. The fact that two ideas relate to the same situation does not mean that they are one proposition. They are still two.
- 3. If there are two propositions, each has to be argued individually. ]

### *The main proposition and supporting points*

Let us examine a theme in which the student has been more systematic, treating minor points as individual propositions and at the same time indicating their relation to the main point of the argument.

#### WHY I BELIEVE IN FREE TRADE

##### 1ST MINOR PROPOSITION:

Protective tariff was once needed.

There was a time when the United States needed tariffs to protect its infant industries. The manufacturers could not have competed with the low prices of goods from the more advanced industries of England. But today the picture is completely different. Giant industries, such as General Motors and General Electric and dozens of others, no longer require protection. Today the United States has no

##### 2ND MINOR PROPOSITION:

Industries now are able to meet competition.

**MAIN PROPOSITION:** Free trade should be adopted (in a negative form).

**Continuation of 2ND MINOR PROPOSITION:** A man of experience speaks.

**3RD MINOR PROPOSITION:** Technology would enable us to compete.

**4TH MINOR PROPOSITION:** Competition accelerates technological advances.

**5TH MINOR PROPOSITION:** Technological advances increase prosperity.

**6TH MINOR PROPOSITION:** Free trade would help merchant marine.

**7TH MINOR PROPOSITION:** Subsidy of merchant marine for military purposes would be reduced.

**8TH MINOR PROPOSITION:** Free trade would improve international relations.

reason for refusing to reinstitute free trade.

In spite of the fact that the United States has the biggest industries in the world, some people feel that American goods cannot compete even on the home market with goods made abroad at cheap wages. But in a recent article in the *Atlantic Monthly* an official of a large corporation took the opposite view, saying that in his own experience open competition without tariff was the best. He argued that constantly improving technology will enable United States industry to keep an edge in reducing prices even in competition with cheap foreign labor costs. Furthermore, he stated that without foreign competition American industry even on home ground would not progress technically at an optimum rate. To his conclusions may be added the theory that every reduction in prices increases the total prosperity through an increase in consumption.

Another reason for the restoration of free trade concerns the merchant marine. If free trade is instituted, the increase in the amount of ocean traffic will lead to the expansion of the merchant marine. Since the United States government must subsidize the maintenance of a large merchant marine for military purposes, free trade might reduce the taxpayer's bill somewhat.

Finally, a free trade policy by the United States would improve its relations with other countries. Opening our markets freely to other countries would be strong evidence of our good will and might help the allies of the United States improve their economic position, thus reducing world tensions. And any reduction in world tension will, of course, result in an economic advantage for the United States, through lowering the need for defense expenditures.

We have here eight minor propositions in addition to the main one. Each minor proposition, we can readily see, could be discussed independently. But — and here we are back to the principle of unity in a theme — all the minor propositions are related to the main one. They are used as supporting points for the main proposition that free trade should be adopted.

### *An issue*

[The main proposition in an argument may, as we have just seen in the theme defending free trade, raise various questions — minor propositions — for discussion and controversy. When one of the minor propositions *must* be proved in order to get the main proposition accepted, that is, to win the argument, that minor proposition is called an *issue*.]

For an example let us look back in the theme on free trade. It is clear that the second minor proposition (our industries now can meet competition) is an issue. If that proposition is not true, then none of the other propositions matter. If our industries are destroyed and we are a bankrupt nation, what use would there be in talking about the merchant marine or foreign relations? If it is accepted that our industries can now survive, then the other minor propositions are relevant and may be used to support the argument.

But can more than one question, or minor proposition, be an issue? Let us look back at the theme. Even after we decide that our industries can meet competition, we may feel that in the world today international good will is necessary to our survival, and so that proposition, too, would become an issue in this argument. We now have two issues.

An instance similar to this may be found in certain cases at law in which one may feel that the letter of the law defeats justice. For example, a defending lawyer in a first-degree murder case may argue that his client had suffered intolerable provocation, that the victim had grievously slandered the defendant's wife, and that the defendant, a simple man, raised in rather primitive surroundings, had thought killing the slanderer to be the only course of honor and decency. The prosecution argues that these facts are not issues in the case, because the legal definition of murder is such-and-such and makes no recognition of the provocation of slander or of the personal background of the accused. The prosecution is, of course, right. The law defines the issues by which the proposition that the defendant is guilty of murder in the first degree must stand or fall.



If the jury does acquit the defendant, it does so out of sentiment, prejudice, or some notion of justice which is inconsistent with the law.

In the above example, the issue is handed to us on a silver platter: the law defines murder. But in many cases we must locate the issues for ourselves. We do this by making an *analysis* of the proposition. Let us remember that in analyzing a proposition of fact and one of action we use quite different methods.]

### *Analysis and propositions of fact*

Let us take some propositions of fact and see how we should go about analyzing them to determine the issues.

We shall begin with a very simple instance, one in which there can be only a single issue. If two men in the wilderness wish to cross a stream, one of them may propose that they drop a tree across it. The other objects that the available tree is too short. They can establish the height of the tree but they cannot establish the width of the stream. Therefore the proposition (that the tree is long enough) is a matter of judgment and is subject to argument. Several arguments, good or bad, may be offered on either side, but there is only one issue: Is the tree long enough? In such cases of simple fact, the proposition itself establishes the issue. But in other cases the fact may not be simple, and there may be no prior definition of the issues.

Let us take such an example in the proposition: "John did right in leaving his fortune to the Ashford Medical Foundation."

First, is this a proposition of fact? It may look like a proposition of action, for John did perform an action. Certainly this would be a proposition of action if it were stated: "John will do right to. . . ." Or: "John should leave. . . ." But in its original form, the proposition concerns an action that has *already* taken place and concerns a judgment of the value of the event. This becomes clear if we translate the proposition into the standard form: "John's conduct in leaving his fortune to the Ashford Medical Foundation is (or was) right."

Second, how can we establish the issues? To do so, we must decide what we mean by the word "right" — a vague word in the predicate of the proposition. Suppose the opponents agree that a deed is ethically right *only* if it fulfills *all* of the following requirements: (1) the doer is responsible; (2) the doer undertakes the deed for a laudable motive; and (3) the consequences of the deed are beneficial. The issues then become:

1. Was John of sound mind when he made his will?
2. Was his motive laudable?
3. Was the money to be used for a beneficial activity?

The affirmative must establish all of these issues in order to win the argument. Suppose that there is no doubt of John's sanity and no doubt that the money will be used for a good purpose. Suppose that these facts or issues are admitted. The second issue then becomes crucial. If the negative establishes that John, in a fit of fury at his daughter for making a marriage without his consent, changed his will to leave his money to the foundation, his motive is a bad one, and the proposition is lost.

[Where a fact is complex, as in the proposition above, the locating of the issues becomes a matter of analyzing the fact. In practice this may mean defining the key word (or words) in the proposition, as *right* was defined above.

### ■ *Application*

Analyze several of the following propositions of fact into minor propositions and issues:

Big-time college football destroys sportsmanship.

Air travel is safer than automobile travel.

Christianity is the basis of American democracy.

The doctrine of states' rights caused the defeat of the Confederacy.

Democracy makes for military inefficiency.

Preparedness prevents war.

The study of literature is useless for a man who plans to go into business.

Industry now attracts the best brains in the country.


Politics has ceased to be attractive to our best men.

Security is the basis of happiness.

### *Analysis and propositions of action*

[To analyze a proposition of action effectively, to be certain that we understand all sides of an argument and can anticipate and answer positions taken by possible opponents, or simply to clear our own minds, we should systematically set up all the propositions we can think of on each side of the main proposition. The minor propositions will tend to go in pairs, one for and one against.

Then we should examine the propositions with these questions in mind:

1. Are the propositions all significant?
2. Do they cover the subject?
3. Do they overlap one another?
4. Does any proposition really include more than one idea? 

Let us glance again at the student theme defending free trade. We have made the breakdown indicated in the left-hand column. We don't know whether or not the author worked out these issues before he began writing. He may, simply, have started writing and hoped his natural good sense would see him through, letting one proposition suggest another, as is the way in the rough-and-tumble argument of conversation. When time permits, however, it is much safer to be systematic and try to work out the problems beforehand. Here is the first stage in the analysis leading to a student theme. The proposition to be analyzed is: "The present system of required courses should be abolished." Or, as the student puts it in his title, "I Don't Like the System of Required Courses."

The first stage is a random jotting down of a number of possible propositions about the subject. Even though our student takes the affirmative side, that is, he wants to abolish the present system, he puts down the negative propositions, too. If he does not, he will not know where to begin, what to answer.

**FOR:**

1. You get the best out of a professor who stimulates you and whose personality you like; in the present system you usually cannot get the professor you want and who is best for you.
2. People are different and should follow their interests and talents.
3. For a person who has not yet settled on a plan for the future, the elective system is best, since it allows him to shop around according to what interests he already has.
4. For a person who wants to specialize, the broad requirements

**AGAINST:**

- The course, well and objectively taught, is the main thing.
- Everyone needs the discipline of doing certain things he is not interested in.
- The required courses give a good cross section and make his shopping around systematic.
- Specialization ought to develop from a broad base.

are a distraction. Specialization will naturally lead to diversity, but a diversity of related things.

5. Requirements may be needed for certain courses, say American history, reading, writing, and so on; but not in general, for everyone is different.
6. The more talent a man has, the more he tends to object to general requirements.
7. Lazy students are still lazy in required courses, a situation which lowers standards.
8. Elective courses for people who have their interests defined encourage thinking, not just cramming.
9. The elective system permits a really systematic survey for the man with interests already set; discourages smattering.
10. Elective system encourages individualism and responsibility—my mistakes, not the dean's.
11. Your best relation to society is in good work in your chosen occupation.
12. The purposes of an education are to teach you to think and give you something to think about.

A common background is necessary if society is to be stable.

A person should not be allowed to warp his talent by idiosyncrasies in choosing courses.

Elective system encourages laziness and election of easy courses.

Required courses encourage thinking by showing broad relationships among different subjects.

No man can be systematic in everything. An acquaintance with a subject does not have to be a smattering, can be good as far as it goes, and give a useful background.

The required system gives a basis for responsible judgment. Mistakes are no asset.

The broad base of the present system gives a student a better, because more informed, relation to society.

Granted; but see numbers 5 and 11.

If we look closely at this list, we see that the items are not in any consistent order. We can see no continuity among them; a theme following this list would lack coherence. So now the problem for the student is to put the various propositions in such order that some sort of transition is possible.

Here is the new order (the circled numbers indicate the order of the first stage, the rough jottings; the other numbers indicate the sequence of ideas after the writer has, presumably, thought things through).

- ⑤ 1. Granted that requirements are needed for certain courses — say American history, reading, writing, and so on. But requirements are not necessary for all courses. A common background is necessary if society is to be stable.
- ⑪ 2. Your best relation to society is in good work in your chosen occupation. The broad base of the present system gives a student a better, because more informed, relation to society.
- ⑫ 3. The purposes of an education are to teach you to think and give you something to think about. Granted; but see numbers 1 and 2.
- ② 4. People are different and should follow their interests and talents. Everyone needs the discipline of doing certain things he is not interested in.
- ③ 5. For a person who has not yet settled on a plan for the future, the elective system is best, since it allows him to shop around according to what interests he already has. The required courses already give a good, because systematic, cross section and make his shopping easier and more fruitful.
- ④ 6. For a person who wants to specialize, the broad requirements are a distraction. Anyway, specialization will naturally lead to diversity, but a diversity of related things. Specialization ought to develop from a broad base, for if it does not the student will never see the implications of his specialty.
- ⑧ 7. Elective courses for those who have their interests already defined encourage thinking, not just cramming, for the student comes with curiosity. Required courses encourage thinking by showing broad relationships among different subjects.
- ⑨ 8. The elective system permits a really systematic survey for the man with interests already set; discourages smattering. No man can be systematic and complete in everything. An acquaintance with a subject does not have to be a smattering, can be good as far as it goes, and give a useful background.
- ⑦ 9. Lazy students will still be lazy in required courses, a situation which lowers standards. Elective system encourages laziness; people seek easy courses.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ① 10. You get the best out of a professor who stimulates you and whose personality you like; in the present system you usually cannot get the professor you want and who is best for you. | The course, well and objectively taught, is the main thing.                              |
| ⑩ 11. Elective system encourages individualism and responsibility — <i>my</i> mistakes, not the dean's.   | The required system gives a basis for responsible judgment later. Mistakes are no asset. |

What, precisely, has the author done in his reorganization?

For one thing, he has cleared the ground by first admitting that certain required courses are necessary. This admission, we note, is in answer to the negative contention that a common background is necessary for a stable society. In the actual theme, as we shall see, he will give his reasons for making the admission. In number 2 he is answering the claims of those who want "core courses" as a way of giving the student a better sense of his relation to society. Now he has indicated answers to the general claims of the negative, those who want a fixed curriculum.

Now, having countered the two main contentions of the negative, he starts his own line of thought by stating what he regards as the purposes of education: to learn to think and to learn something to think about. His emphasis, we see, is on the individual, and with number 4 we come to a statement of this emphasis: the development of individual capacities rather than a general discipline. From that point on through number 10 he is dealing with the specific advantages that he thinks an elective system gives. But with number 11, he returns to a general proposition, the advantage of the elective system in building character, in developing a sense of individual responsibility. This proposition might have come early, along with the purposes of an education, and perhaps it would have been more systematic to put it there. But it can serve as a sort of conclusion, a general proposition, the result of the other propositions.

We see that the student has the main body of the argument fairly well lined up. But is he ready to write? Probably not; for to open with the development of proposition 1 would be abrupt and perhaps misleading. How would the reader get his bearings and see the main proposition? The next step would be to work out an introduction. The introduction should state the main proposition of the argument, that is, give the subject, and it should indicate

why the argument is interesting or urgent for the writer and for the reader. (See Chapter 2)

Some indication of the background of the question, even if given in a most casual way, may be useful to catch the reader's interest and to help him orient himself

Here is the theme, embodying the student's introduction

#### I DON'T LIKE THE SYSTEM OF REQUIRED COURSES

#### Introduction

I have been in college nearly a year and I begin to see what I am up against in getting an education. I don't want to seem prissy about this, for getting an education is not all I think about. But I do have some sense of why I came here in the first place. If I forgot it, my father would remind me, and how! Besides I put in three hours a day as bus boy in the cafeteria just to help pay for my education, and if anybody thinks those three hours are undiluted pleasure he is mistaken. That pleasure is like the chicken soup and the Grade A milk—*diluted*. Every time I put on that white jacket I have to remind myself why I am here and not out selling insurance to an insurance hungry public or making five dollars an hour at the Acme Machine Company. I don't mean to say either that I am a brilliant student. I make an occasional A and more than an occasional C. I've been known to make an F. I expect an F in "Social Studies I" this term. It is a required course, by the way. I am opposed to the present system of required courses. They make it hard to get an education.

I don't mean to say that there should be no required courses. Professional schools have to have certain pre-requisites, such as biology for medical school. And I'll grant that everybody ought to be able to read and write reasonably well and ought to know some other things, for instance, American history, just so he won't fall for every politician's speech, if for no other reason. But what alter that?

⑤

1. They say in the catalogue that what they call "required core courses" give the student a "common background to make for a stable society." They give a common background, all right. It is the common background of being bored. I am bored at one thing and the next man is bored at something else, and so the whole course is in an atmosphere of boredom. But seriously, if you are in this atmosphere of boredom you don't learn enough to get a common background.

That common background is just in the minds of the people who wrote the catalogue

Another thing they say in the catalogue is that these core courses give the student an intelligent relation to his society, which means, I guess, that he sees how he personally fits into the picture. Now it seems to me that a man fits into the picture well enough when he does decent, honest work at his chosen occupation. That is his best relation to society, and anybody but a simpleton knows what his job is in relation to society. Somebody has to roll pills and somebody has to drive trucks.

As a starting point for my argument, I'll simply declare that the purpose of an education is twofold: to learn how to think, and to learn something to think about. The first, it seems to me, is more important than the second, for if you don't know how to think, putting information in your head is just like burying the gold at Fort Knox. It is there, but what good is it? But I think that both purposes are important, and if a college doesn't deliver them, then that college is on the wrong track. The question is, what is the right track?

I don't mean to imply that you spend a part of your time learning how to think and then the next year start getting something to think about. You have to do both at the same time, and that's the way a college curriculum ought to be set up. This college curriculum is not set up that way. It fails because it doesn't recognize a very important fact: the fact that everybody is different, and that what is good for one person isn't necessarily good for the next one and doesn't help him develop his best qualities. The dean says he knows what is best for everybody. But it seems to me that the dean, or whoever is responsible, ought to help the student find what is most interesting to *him*, to Joe Doaks, so he can put his heart into it and get somewhere. For example, I have to take a course next year called "Books That Have Made History." I have read a few already, just two or three, but enough to know that I'll like some and hate others. I looked into Newton, and I don't see why I have to read it. Apples are going to fall whether I do or not. But what I did read of the Frenchman Rousseau I liked. That is human interest. I don't mean that I am going to be a psychologist, but what is human, like history or fiction, interests me. What I am saying is that I want to be able to follow my own interests and be *me*, and not a serial number in eight required courses of two thousand students each.



③

If I can find and develop my interests, maybe I can find some sort of capacity for doing something in life

I have said that people ought to follow their interests. You can divide beginning college students into two groups: those who don't know what they want and those who do. I think the elective system is better for both groups.

5-

As for the first group, everybody has some interests, and even if the interests aren't very strong or haven't settled into a definite plan, the elective system lets him explore. You can say that the required courses give a systematic exploration, a cross section of knowledge, but the very fact that the courses are required kills off the sense of exploration, of being on your own and trying to find out about yourself. The student is put through a mill and may or may not happen to find an interest. For one thing, he may be so resentful at the pressure from upstairs that he wants no part of the courses. And he won't do much thinking or learning either. Not his best, anyway.

④

6

As for the student who really knows what he wants, the required courses are just a bother and a distraction. He comes to college to get to work, and these courses begin to block him and kill interest. You can argue that everybody needs discipline, but I would argue back that the business of working up the subject you are interested in is a discipline, too. You aren't interested in every aspect of the subject, but you drive yourself to fill out the picture of your big interest. To me that is the useful kind of discipline. They say you ought to have a "broad base" for specialization, but I don't see any reason for "diversity" if the diversity isn't somehow related to what your main interest is.

To prove my point I'll mention my cousin, who is twelve years older than I am and who went to Cambridge, England, on a fellowship. He tells me that there you specialize in one thing for your whole four years. You really know a subject when you get through, even if you aren't in the top of your class. I asked him last summer if it didn't seem awful narrow, but he gave me something to think about when he said that if you really, honestly specialize, you begin to see how a lot of things relate to your subject and you want to find out about them on your own. So specialization starts you to thinking on your own. It encourages you to branch out. My cousin said he never cared much for Shakespeare until he got to studying the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

- ⑧ 7. (he specialized in English history), but now he reads the plays all the time, for fun. Then he got interested in economics, for without understanding something about that he couldn't understand what was behind a lot of historical facts.
- ⑨ 8. What I am saying is that my cousin didn't get just a smattering here and a smattering there. He learned a lot about one thing and in a well thought out and organized way. Then when he learned a little about economics it was more than a smattering. It wasn't equal to majoring in economics, but it had relevance to his interests and he remembered it.
- ⑦ 9. You may say that my cousin sounds like an egghead or a superman, but he isn't. He just has common sense, but he developed his interests. He was in a place where he was encouraged to develop them. But no system is going to do anything for a fellow who is dumb or lazy. He sits there in the required course and flunks or crabs notes or clams, and because the teacher has to work on a curve, the level of passing gets pretty low. And the fellow who is dumb in fiction (which I like) may be a genius over in the physics lab — year after next. Meanwhile, he is just suffering.
- ① 10. If one of the purposes of an education is to teach you to think, the present system fails. For one thing, the professor you like and respect is the one who best helps you to think. You get to follow his way of thinking and that gives you a kind of model. But now you rarely get more than one shot at such a teacher. For another thing in the big required courses, the professor has to dish it out of the can with ten minutes a week for questions. You are just being passed down the hopper.
- ⑩ 11. There is one more objection, and a big one. The present system violates my notion of individualism and character building. I know. I need advice and help. I came to college for that. But I need advice on how to find out things for myself, how to develop my own interests. I want to be able to take or leave the advice. I want my own responsibility. I'll make mistakes, but they'll be *my* mistakes and not the dean's.

The body of the theme is fairly well worked out. But has the writer clearly indicated what the crucial issues in the argument are? Probably not, but if we look closely we can see what they are. For one thing, this writer puts a very strong emphasis on the individual, and on individual interests and capacities, while the negative (as

it is worked out in the analysis of the proposition) tends to put more emphasis on the relation of the individual to society and on the disciplining of the individual.

As for the actual course of the argument, the writer's notion of the purpose of education is clearly a manifestation of his bias toward individualism: to teach the individual to think and to give him something to think about. After stating this purpose, he is committed to stacking up the advantages and disadvantages, point by point.

To summarize, three issues are crucial for the writer: (1) he must gain acceptance of his notion of the value of the emphasis on the individual; (2) he must gain acceptance of his idea of the purposes of education which stem from this emphasis; and (3) he must assemble particular propositions indicating that the elective system better accomplished those purposes than the other system. If he does not get our acceptance on *any one* of these points, he has lost the argument. He has not convinced us. Naturally, in a short theme we can scarcely expect to find elaborate development of the first and second of these issues, but we might have expected a fuller awareness of their underlying importance than he has given us. A fuller awareness of these issues would have given the theme a better sense of unity and coherence.

### ■ Applications

- I In the student theme above, can you think of any additional propositions on either side? If so, state and develop them. Where might they fit into the student's analysis at the second stage without violating continuity? Perhaps there is no appropriate place. If so, how would you reorganize the list to accommodate them? Do you accept the conclusions of the theme? If not, explain your reasons.
- II You are now going to write a theme in which you argue for some conviction you hold. Think over your strong convictions, the things which are really important to you.
  - 1 Select a conviction which you can put in the form of a proposition of action. (See page 108.)
  - 2 Be sure that the proposition is *clear* and *single*.
  - 3 Make an analysis of the proposition, first jotting down minor propositions for and against, as they happen to come into your head, then putting them in order.

- 4 Now that you have your propositions in order, develop them; that is, show how the propositions that you accept are stronger, more reasonable, than the objections that might be raised against them. This will give you a series of independent paragraphs, or independent groups of paragraphs, for each individual proposition you discuss.
- 5 Now, to make a rounded theme of your material, you need (a) to write an introduction, (b) to establish some kind of continuity and transition from one paragraph, or group of paragraphs, to the next in the body of your argument, and (c) to write a conclusion. (See Chapter 2.) The introduction may well say why you think the subject should be argued at all. What is the importance of the subject to you at this time or to society in general? Why is the subject interesting at all? In other words, if you expect your audience to follow your argument, you must catch their attention. As for the conclusion, that may well be a summary of your position.

## EVIDENCE

Once we have analyzed the proposition of an argument and know the issues, have arranged and outlined the order of the argument, and have decided on an introduction, we are ready to flesh out the discussion, to argue each supporting point of the main proposition. We have already read two student themes, one about free trade and one about the required curriculum, and have seen how the writers went about filling out their arguments. As we have said before, the principles of argument as an appeal to reason are *not* something imposed upon the mind; they are, instead, simply a statement of the way the mind naturally works when we are thinking clearly.

[Your opponent, when you get into an argument, will be from Missouri. He will say, "Seeing is believing," and what he wants to see is the evidence. Without evidence you can offer only your own unsupported views, which you already know your opponent will not accept, for if he did accept them, there would be no argument in the first place. ✓

But what constitutes evidence? Either fact or opinions may constitute evidence, and both are applicable in support of propositions of fact or propositions of action.] People constantly appeal to facts (or try to appeal to facts) to support argument. For example,

we need facts to justify an action; we don't want to act ignorantly. "The facts of the case" are important as evidence, but they are not the only thing that can be used as evidence. Arguers also appeal to the opinions of other people who are supposed to have authority. "Expert testimony" is offered in the courtroom as evidence to support a case. A murder trial may bring out a psychiatrist, a ballistics expert, a medical examiner, and any number of other experts whose opinions are to be considered by the jury. Presumably they base their testimony on facts, but what the jury is asked to accept is their *opinion*, their judgment of the facts. An expert may be wrong, and experts frequently disagree among themselves, but what they ordinarily disagree about is not the facts but their interpretation of the facts.

This so-called expert opinion is not the only kind that may appear as evidence. The law also recognizes what is called the "character witness," an ordinary person who offers his opinion as to the character of the defendant.

[What tests can we apply to evidence to satisfy ourselves that it is worth admitting into an argument?

### *Facts as evidence*

A fact must be a fact. What is offered as a fact may on occasion turn out to be merely a mistaken opinion.] We know this pattern well from detective stories. A "fact" points to the guilt of a certain character, who is arrested by the stupid police sergeant. The clever detective proves that the "fact" — that Miss Perkins was observed near the scene of the crime at a certain hour — is not a fact at all; the true criminal had taken Miss Perkins' hooded raincoat and worn it while committing his crime. Justice is done: Miss Perkins is exonerated and the criminal is arrested.

[A fact must be (1) verified or (2) attested to by a reliable source.

### *Verification*

Certain facts can be established by referring to some regularity in nature: that a certain type of cord will not support a certain weight, that potassium permanganate will explode under certain conditions,] that the robin's egg is a certain shade of blue with brown markings, that a certain night of the year does not have a full moon, that *rigor mortis* sets in at a certain time after death. [Each such fact belongs to a pattern in nature which is observable, and to test a particular fact we refer it to the pattern.] We have an example in a story of one of Abraham Lincoln's law cases. A witness

testified that he had observed a certain event. Lincoln asked him how, and he replied that he had seen it by moonlight. By producing an almanac, Lincoln showed that there had been no moon on the night in question. Lincoln tested the fact by referring it to a natural pattern.

### *Fact established by testimony*

Suppose, however, that Lincoln had not been able to check the witness by an almanac. What questions could he have asked to determine the reliability of the evidence offered by the witness? Four questions are relevant in such a case:

1. Is there opportunity for the witness to observe the event?
2. Is the witness physically capable of observing the event?
3. Is the witness intellectually capable of understanding the event and reporting accurately?
4. Is the witness honest?

The first question is clear enough, but the others are a little more complicated. For instance, if a blind newsman attests that Bill Sims was present in a railway station at such a time, how good is his evidence? Was he capable of observing the event? If it can be demonstrated that the blind man is capable of recognizing a familiar step and is acquainted with the step of Bill Sims, who stopped at his newsstand every day to buy cigarettes, then it can be assumed that the newsman is capable of recognizing Bill Sims' presence. If, furthermore, it can be accepted that the blind newsman has common sense, is not given to delusions, flights of fancy, or exaggeration, and has a good memory, then it can be assumed that he is intellectually able to understand and report the event. What remains is the question of honesty. If the blind newsman has no connection with the case, if no malice, profit, or other special interest is involved, then it can be readily assumed that his report is an honest one. But if some motive which might make him color or falsify the report can be established, then this fact must be assessed in relation to what is known about the newsman's general character. If such a motive can be established, his report probably would not be readily accepted.

The case we have given for reliability here—the blind newsman's testimony—is a relatively simple one, but it illustrates the kind of questions that must be raised in all situations involving testimony. A historian trying to determine the truth about an event long past, a Congressional committee conducting a hearing on an economic situation, a farmer shopping for a new tractor, all

are engaged in assessing the reliability of testimony and must ask the same questions. And so must you, on occasion after occasion, in daily life as well as in your college reading and writing.

To sum up: [Only facts that can be verified or reliably attested should be admitted into the argument.]

### *Opinion as evidence*

[On what basis can we invoke opinion in an argument? We demand authority for an opinion. There is no use in introducing an opinion to support an argument if the opinion will carry little or no weight.] For instance, no lawyer would want to introduce as expert a witness who had no reputation for competence in his particular field. The manufacturer of athletic supplies wants a champion, not a dud, to endorse his tennis racquet, and the manufacturer of cosmetics wants a lady of fashion or a famous actress to give a testimonial for his facial cream. [We should be as sure as possible that any authority which we invoke in an argument is a real authority: a second-rate navy is no navy, and a second-rate authority is no authority, when the moment of combat comes.]

### *Tests of authority*

[How do we find out if an authority is real authority?] "Ask the man who owns one," a famous automobile advertising slogan suggests; and the maker of a washing machine shows the picture of a happy housewife standing by her prized appliance. The advertisers here appeal to authority on the principle that the proof of the pudding is in the eating: ask the eater, for he is an authority. This is a kind of rough-and-ready authority based on experience, useful but very limited in the degree of conviction which it can carry. Very probably the automobile buyer has not used many different makes of cars, and the housewife has not used many different kinds of washing machines. The opinion of an impartial technical expert who had tested many makes of car or washing machine for efficiency, durability, and so forth, would carry much more authority. Here we appeal to experience, too, but to the experience of the expert.

[Authority is very often based on an appeal to success. Success is often the mark of expertness.] The rich man is supposed to know how to make money, the famous painter how to paint pictures, the heavyweight champion how to fight. [Success carries prestige and predisposes us to accept the pronouncement of the successful man. But we should still scrutinize success as a criterion for authority.] Perhaps the rich man got rich by luck — he *happened* to get

into business at a time of expansion and rising markets. No doubt he himself attributes his success to his own sterling character, shrewdness, and indefatigable industry, but we may be more inclined to trust the evidence of the economic situation of his time. Or the famous painter may have been lucky enough to hit upon a popular fashion; history is littered with the carcasses of artists of all kinds whose success was the accident of the moment. The heavyweight gives us a better instance, for it is a simpler one — he merely had to square off with one man at one moment and slug it out. But perhaps a granite jaw, a fighting heart, and an explosive punch gave him the championship, and all that he has to say about training, footwork, and strategy may be wrong. He didn't succeed by luck, as did the businessman or the painter; he really did flatten the opponent by his own force — but he may give the wrong reasons for his success.

[The fact of success doesn't necessarily mean that the successful man really knows the conditions of his success. And he can speak with authority only if he does know. Many successful people are like the man who lived to be a hundred and revealed his secret for long life: "I never read less than one chapter of the Holy Writ a day or drink more than three slugs of likker a night."

Not infrequently we encounter an appeal to what, for lack of a better phrase, we may call authority by transference. Because a man is considered a success and an authority in one field, it is assumed that he is an authority on anything. The famous musician is used as an authority on statesmanship, the great mathematician is appealed to as an authority on morality, and the great physicist on religion.] the All-America fullback endorses a certain breakfast food, and a debutante prefers such-and-such a cigarette. [There may sometimes be a good reason for taking success as a basis for authority, but there is none for this kind of transference. This sort of reasoning is obviously nonsensical and pernicious, for it is simply a means of imposing on the gullibility of the audience.

Authority has some relation to time. What was acceptable as authority at one time may not be acceptable at another. In any field where the body of knowledge is constantly being enlarged and revised, timeliness is very important. A book on chemistry or physics written ten years ago may now lack authority in certain respects, or a history of the American Civil War written in 1875 may now be considered very misleading. Should George Washington's views on foreign policy influence our own? We want the best authority of our time.

Let us suppose that we wish to find an authority on some point



of American history. It will not do to go to the library and take down the first book on the subject. The mere fact of print bestows no authority, for every error is somewhere embalmed between boards. We have to find out something about the author. Is he of recent date? (That is, would he have available the latest research on the subject?) Does he have any special bias or prejudice which must be discounted? Does he occupy a responsible position or has he had other professional recognition? (For instance, is he on the faculty of some important university, have his works been favorably reviewed, and so forth?) How do his views compare with the views of other historians of recognized importance? To answer these questions means that we have to find out something about American history, even though we are not capable of settling the particular point in question by our own investigation.

### *Authority and the audience*

One more thing must be considered. The authority we use must convince a particular audience. Effective authority is authority which is acceptable to the particular audience. The Mohammedan *Koran* carries no authority to a Christian; the Pope carries no authority to a Methodist, and the first chapter of Genesis carries no authority to a geologist. If we can use an authority that our audience already knows and respects, we have an initial advantage. If this is not possible, then we must establish the prestige of the authority. We can sometimes do this merely by informing the audience, but sometimes we must resort to persuasion. (The discussion of persuasion will be taken up later in the chapter.)

### ■ *Applications*

- I Analyze and criticize the evidence offered in some advertisements of common commodities; for instance, a tooth paste, a breakfast food, an automobile or a truck, a cigarette, a face powder, a laundry soap.
- II Analyze and criticize the evidence offered in a political editorial or article.
- III Analyze the evidence you have offered in your last theme. Would you now care to revise your theme?

## REASONING

Once we have assembled our evidence and tested its acceptability, we need to find out for ourselves, and show to others, what the evidence means in relation to the argument, how the evidence will lead to our conclusion. This is not a new process for us. The whole business of living, from first to last, is a long education in the use of reason. Fire burns, cats scratch, pulling things off tables brings a frown or a spanking — we learn these great truths early. Later on we learn other truths — a stitch in time saves nine, honesty is the best policy, to be good is to be happy. We say we learn from experience (or from someone else's experience), but that is not quite true. Experience would teach us nothing if we could not reason about experience.

Reasoning is the process by which the mind moves from certain data (the evidence) to a conclusion. We can make this progress from data to conclusion because we recognize some regularity in our world. We are back, in other words, to the principle of uniformity, which we talked about in connection with cause (page 95).

How does the principle affect our reasoning? We put the particular case up against the general principle to see whether it fits. We know that green apples are sour; therefore we do not eat the green apple we find hanging so invitingly on the bough before us. We know that heavy drinkers tend to have unsteady hands; therefore we don't want Dr. Jebb to operate on our uncle.

### *Induction: generalization*

Let us examine two examples of the kind of reasoning called *induction*. A businessman has, at different times, hired five boys from the Hawkins School and has found them all honest, well-mannered, and well-educated. Therefore, when the sixth boy comes along for a job, the man will be inclined to hire him. In other words, the man has generalized from the five instances to the conclusion that all boys from Hawkins School are honest, well-mannered, and well-educated. The man has made a *generalization*, moving from a number of particular instances to the general conclusion that all instances of the type investigated will be of this same sort.

To take a second example of generalization: After long observation men have concluded that water always freezes at a certain temperature, 32 degrees Fahrenheit. We assume that the same kind of event in nature always happens in the same way under the same conditions — metal expands when heated; in a vacuum falling

bodies, no matter what their mass, move at the same rate. Without this assumption of uniformity we could not accept the conclusion that we arrive at from examining the individual instances. And, in fact, all science is based upon this assumption.

The principle also applies in the reasoning about the boys from Hawkins School. We assume that certain intellectual standards are maintained, that certain manners are insisted upon, that honesty is inculcated, and that the stupid, idle, boorish, or dishonest boy is not graduated. It does not matter that the conclusions we reach in reasoning about the graduates of Hawkins School compel a degree of assent different from that we hold in regard to the temperature for freezing water. We scarcely doubt that the next pail of water we leave out will freeze at a certain temperature, but we do doubt that absolutely all graduates of Hawkins School are models of education, manners, and honesty. We recognize here that the principle of uniformity (Hawkins's standards) in human nature is scarcely as dependable as the principle of uniformity in physical nature.

### *The inductive leap*

[We recognize that the conclusion we reach about the boys from Hawkins School is only a probability, but students of logic tell us that from the strictly logical standpoint the conclusion that water always freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit is only a probability. This is true because no argument which moves from *some* to *all* can give more than a probability. Undoubtedly millions of instances of water freezing at that temperature have been observed, but *all* instances — past, present, and future — have not been observed. After examining a certain number of instances, we take the leap from the *some* to the *all*, the *inductive leap* — another word for the process of *generalization*. We cannot be sure about all possible instances. It does no good to appeal to the principle of uniformity in nature by saying that water is water and will always behave the same way, for that principle is itself simply derived from the inspection of a number of instances and itself represents a leap from *some* to *all*.

What tests can we apply to reduce the risk of error in making the inductive leap?]

### *Tests for generalization*

[First, a fair number of instances must be investigated. One instance or two prove nothing.] Somebody says: "All Chinese are short and slender. Why, I used to know one out in Wyoming, and he

wasn't more than five feet tall and I bet he didn't weigh more than a hundred pounds." Or: "All boys from St. Joseph's College are snobs. There was a fellow from home. . . ." We all know this type of reasoning and can see that it proves nothing. A fair number of instances have not been examined. But there is no way to determine certainly what is a fair number of instances. We simply must use all the evidence available to us in the given circumstances and remember that only the untrained mind is rash enough to leap without looking.

Second, the instances investigated must be typical. In a laboratory the scientist may be able to test a substance to be sure it is typical of its kind. He can, for example, detect alcohol in a sample of water and therefore will not use that sample in an experiment to demonstrate the freezing point of water.

But sometimes we have to assume, without testing the fact, that the instances available are typical. For example, the businessman who has hired five boys from Hawkins School assumes that they are typical, that other boys from the school will be like them. At other times, however, when we are facing such a problem, we can choose from among a number of instances for our investigation; in such a situation we should be sure that the instances chosen are representative. Let us consider the problem of a sociologist who, for some purpose, wishes to give a description of life in the southern Appalachians. The sociologist picks three settlements, investigates the pattern of life there, and concludes that life (in general) in the southern Appalachians is such-and-such. But a rival sociologist may point out that the settlements chosen are not typical, that, unlike most residents of the region, the people are of Swiss descent and maintain a good many Swiss customs. The first sociologist's generalization, then, may be worthless because his instances are not typical.

Third, if negative instances occur they must be explained. Obviously, any negative instance occurring among those which we are using as a basis for generalization will reduce the force of the generalization unless we can demonstrate that the negative instance is *not* typical and therefore need not be considered. For example, if the businessman who has hired five Hawkins boys and found them all honest, hires a sixth and finds that he is pilfering in the stock room, he may decide that he must give up the generalization that the Hawkins graduates are desirable employees. But he may discover that the boy who did the pilfering is a very special case, that he is really unbalanced, is a kleptomaniac, and consequently cannot be

taken as typical. Therefore, the businessman returns to his generalization that Hawkins graduates are desirable employees.

[To summarize, the tests for making a generalization are:

1. A fair number of instances must be investigated.
2. The instances investigated must be typical.
3. All negative instances must be explained.]

### *Induction: analogy*

[Another type of induction is by *analogy*. This type of reasoning is based on the idea that if two instances are alike in a number of important points, they will be alike in the point in question.] For example, a board of directors might argue that Jim Brown would make a good corporation executive because he has been a colonel in the army. The analogy here is between the requirements for a good army officer and a good business executive. The points of similarity might be taken as the ability to deal with men, the ability to make and execute policy, the willingness to take responsibility. Then if Brown has been successful as a colonel, it is assumed that he will be successful as a business executive.

[We can arrive at certain tests for analogy similar to those for generalization:

1. The two instances compared must be similar in important respects.
2. Differences between the two instances must be accounted for as being unimportant.

In addition to these tests, we must remember that increasing the number of parallels tends to strengthen our argument.] For example, if Brown, the man being considered for an executive position in the corporation, has been a successful division chief in a government bureau as well as a successful colonel, his case is strengthened in the eyes of the board. [But with analogy, as with generalization, we can arrive only at probability.]

### ■ *Applications*

- 1 Here is another student theme involving argument. In a rather informal way it gives examples of induction, both by generalization and by analogy. Study it as a first step toward writing a theme of your own. The comments on the left margin may help you in seeing the general organization and the uses made of induction.

## WHY I CHOSE — COLLEGE

The proposition, which is never fully stated but given informally, is 'I should go to — College.' This is of course, a proposition of action. The analysis which is also given informally, involves the three ways in which — College could contribute to the student's medical preparation. These are the issues

Here the writer is assembling facts as evidence for the college as a place for pre-med work. Here is an inductive argument, a generalization. Men from — College are well prepared for medical school. True, there are two negative cases but one of those can be explained on grounds of poor health.

More evidence, in fact, another generalization. Many men from here have done well in medicine.

Here an argument by analogy comes in. The famous biologist is accessible in this small college and will provide an opportunity for observation similar to that the boy enjoys with his father and family. "Learning by

Before I decided on coming here to — College, I had to do a lot of arguing with myself and with my family and some friends. But first, I had better say what the argument was about. All my family are doctors, all the men, that is — my father, two uncles and a first cousin — and all of them are good at the business. When I was a kid it just never crossed my mind to be a policeman or cowboy. It was doctor all the way, to use the language of the race track where my father takes me now and then when he gets any time off. He once said to me that it was just as well that being a doctor takes so much time, for otherwise he might be a tout.

My marks in school were good enough for me to have some choice in the college I could go to. Naturally the first thing I wanted to know about any college was whether you could get good pre-med work. Everybody knows that you can get good pre-med training at Harvard or the other big universities, and I am aiming at the Harvard Medical School, but a smaller college like this one has to be investigated. I did, and I found out that in the last ten years, 22 per cent of the graduates of — College have gone into medicine, and most of them have studied at medical schools in the top ten or so. Only two men failed to finish, and one of them had a physical break down. This record seems to settle the case for — College as a good place for pre-med. I knew, too, that a lot of older men from here had become very successful doctors.

On the faculty here, too, is one famous biologist. In a small place like this you can work pretty close to a big man and watch how he does things and thinks about problems. You see, I think I have learned a lot already, just hearing my

osmosis' is another use of analogy. Look up *osmosis* and see how it provides an analogy.

Here again are facts used as evidence. Distance from home and the honors course will help the student gain a sense of responsibility.

The fact of a good English department will help in medical training. But this statement needs explaining. The explanation is made necessary by the cousin's objection.

The explanation in opposition to the cousin's view comes with some weight of authority in the opinion, for here another successful doctor speaks. The uncle's analogy in presenting his argument. Or rather he attacks the cousin with an implied analogy.

father and the family talk about cases and medical problems, and I calculated that the same process of what you might call learning by osmosis (I had high school biology and know about osmosis) could continue for me in a smaller college better than in a big one.

This last paragraph sounds as if I were tied to my family and dependent on them. I admire them, but I don't want to be dependent. That is one reason I didn't go to college near home or to Stanford, where my family all went and are well remembered for studies and athletics. I wanted to get far away and be on my own so that I would become grown up. A doctor has to learn responsibility early, or he is no good. The senior honors course here at — also teaches responsibility, because it requires you to work out a big problem on your own.

There was another reason why I chose —, in addition to its good pre-med record and the distance from home. It has a well-known English department. I don't mean this to sound like flattery, because everybody knows it is true. When I mentioned this reason to my cousin Dr. Bob Mathews, he laughed at me and said I had better leave that English alone and get in some extra science. 'Son,' he said, "all the writing you will have to do if you are a good doctor is filling out prescriptions and signing your income tax return." I know that my cousin sort of laughs, too, at Uncle Bob, his father, in a friendly way and kids him for reading so much and writing a lot of articles, some of them not straight through professional, but just for the layman.

I asked my uncle about Cousin Bob's point of view, and he said about Cousin Bob: 'That's what you can expect from a surgeon. A surgeon is like a car mechanic. He just goes into the machine and patches it up. Except for what is wrong with the mechanism, every patient

The body is like a machine. This analogy will not hold for general medicine.

More opinion as corroborative evidence, with weight of authority, for the father is a good doctor. The father is attacking the cousin's point of view, and he extends the analogy. The body isn't just a machine, but a machine *with* a driver.

Poker gives another analogy. How good an analogy is this?

The conclusion sets out to be a mere summary of the three issues as resolved in the discussion, but the writer trails off rather unsystematically into an observation about his personal interest in literature and the use of a hobby for a doctor.

looks alike to him. That may be all right for a surgeon, but you plan to be a general practitioner. I'm one myself, and I wouldn't be anything else. It's the kind of medicine that has the human quality in the fullest way."

My father says, too, that in general practice human nature plays a big part. You have to understand the patient all the way through, not just the patient as a machine with a broken part. He says that you have to know who the driver of the machine is, and when he says that, he touches his forehead. "Lots of times it is bad driving that busts the axle, no fault in the steel."

My father agrees with my uncle and says that literature is one way of studying human nature — and a good way. But he winked at me, then, and said, "But don't forget poker. That's a pretty good way, too. Why do you think I strip all these lawyers around here in my biweekly game? Hell, they're being so logical about everything, and I'm just looking at their faces for symptoms." My father kids a lot, but he is supposed to be one of the best poker players in Santa Barbara, as well as one of the best doctors.

To sum up, I had to know that — is a good place for pre-med work, that it is a good place for me to try to be independent, and that it is a good place for me to study literature for the purpose I have in mind (though I mean to study it, too, because I like it, and a doctor needs some sort of relaxation, such as my father's racing and occasional poker).

II Consider the following problems in the light of the principles of generalization and analogy:

I I am in charge of personnel for the Arton Engineering Company. Two men, John Sims and Thomas Brown, have applied for an important training appointment that will lead, presumably, to a highly responsible post in the company. Sims has graduated in engineering with an average



of B—. Brown is a mathematics major with an A— average in that subject, a B+ in English, and some very low marks in several subjects. Which man should I hire?

- 2 I am not going to marry a girl whose mother is always sick and complaining. Look at what happened to Jack Carton after he married Elizabeth.
- 3 That man has had three accidents. I won't ride in his car. He's jinxed.

Bring to class examples of fallacious reasoning which you have discovered in newspapers, magazines, and television or radio programs.

- III Write a theme in argument (about 500 words), using in the course of your discussion both generalization and analogy. Give an introductory setting for your argument. One of the following propositions may suggest a subject to you:

There ought to be a required course in English composition (or in American history or some other subject).

Professional wrestling is faked.

College students should not have cars on campus.

Hemingway is a better novelist than Faulkner (or vice versa).

Despite modern appliances, housewives today are worse off than housewives of fifty years ago.

Comic books are a cause of juvenile delinquency.

Young people today are more conservative and more fearful than young people of twenty years ago.

## Deduction

[In concluding our discussion of induction, we said that in both generalization and analogy we do not get certainty, only probability. This was not to say that generalization and analogy are not useful. In fact, they are necessary to us, for many of our most important questions can be dealt with only in terms of probability. But there is a type of reasoning which can be distinguished from induction on the basis of probability: *deduction* does not give probability; within its proper limits it gives certitude.]

We are already familiar with the process of deduction from our study of geometry in high school. We remember that geometry starts with certain axioms. For instance: "Things that are equal to the same thing are equal to each other." Or: "If equals be added to equals, the wholes are equal." There is no attempt in the system

of geometry to prove these axioms. They simply seem right to us, and we accept them for our first theorem. Then, having deduced that first theorem, we can prove the second — and deduce it — and so on through the whole system generated by the axioms. Once we have the axioms, the whole system of geometry must, *necessarily*, follow. It cannot be otherwise.

What we start with in geometry we call *axioms*, the things we accept without discussion or demand of proof. [In general argument, when we are reasoning deductively, we also start from certain assumptions, which we call *premises*. Once certain premises are accepted, a certain conclusion *must* follow. We said above that “within its proper limits” deduction gives certitudes. Those “proper limits” are always what the particular premises will permit. Of course, if we accept bad premises, our conclusion may well be bad. *What we are concerned with here, however, is not the selection of premises, but the process of reasoning from them deductively to their necessary conclusion.*]

### *Deduction and reasoning by classes*

[The word *deduction* comes from two Latin words, *de*, meaning “from,” and *ducere*, meaning “to lead.” To deduce is, then, to lead from something to a conclusion. What we lead from is, of course, the premise. What is the process by which we move deductively from premises? How do we think deductively?

To think inductively is, as we have said, to work from particular instances to a general notion. To think deductively is the reverse process, to work from a general notion to a particular application. And this means that to think deductively is to think *by classes*.

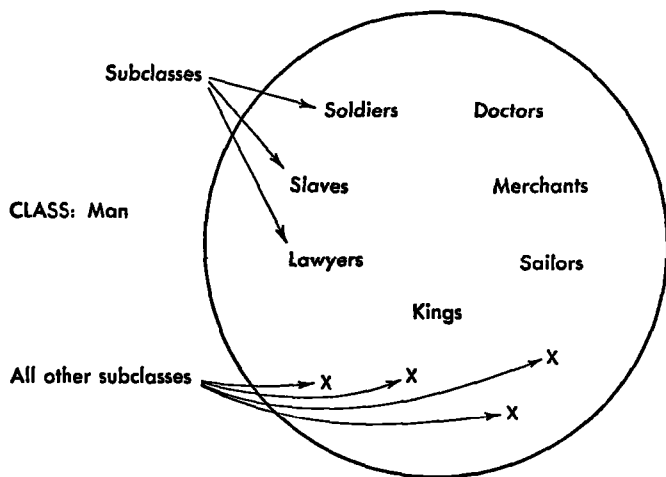
We already have made an acquaintance with this process in studying various types of exposition; for instance, definition. In studying definition, as in studying classification, we are concerned with seeing how larger classes include smaller classes, and so on, up and down a scale. In discussing the process of definition, we tried to explain by diagrams of classes the notion of convertibility as a test of definition (pages 43-44).]

For instance, we found that the statement, “A slave is a man,” is not a definition. It is a true statement, but that does not make it a definition. In a definition we must be able to substitute either term for the other in any form of the statement. We accepted the definition that a slave is a person who is legally held as the property of another because we can substitute the term *human being who is the legal property of another* in any context where the term *slave* is acceptable. Take the statement, “To be a slave is worse than

death." Here we can make the substitution — can *convert* the terms — and we get exactly the same sense: "To be a human being who is the legal property of another is worse than death."

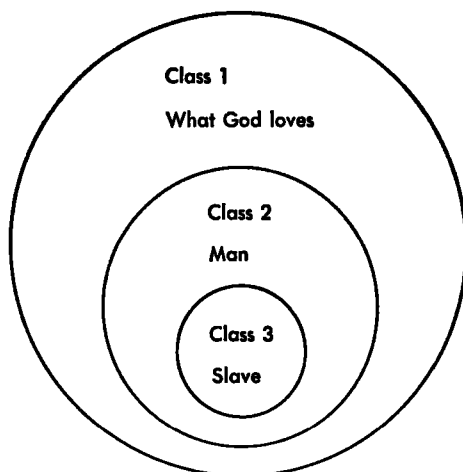
We cannot, however, convert the terms of the statement, "A slave is a man." If we try it in the statement above, we get, "To be a man is worse than death," a notion which will find few takers.

Why are the terms *man* and *slave* not convertible, since they are linked in a true statement? The answer is simple: The term *man* indicates a class more inclusive than the term *slave*. In fact, *slave* is just one of many subclasses under the class *man*. We can indicate this by drawing a circle:



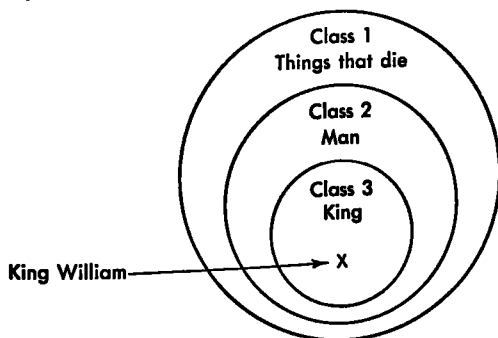
It is clear that much we might say about the class *slave* is not necessarily true about the class *man*; that is, about men in general. But it is also clear that whatever we can say about the class *man* is *necessarily* true about the class *slave*, for the class *slave* is included in the class *man*. And what we say about the class *man* would be applicable, too, to doctors, lawyers, soldiers, and all other kinds of men. For instance, once we say, "God loves all men," we can clearly say, "God loves slaves." We have stated a premise, "God loves all men," and the other statement, the conclusion, necessarily follows from it. It follows necessarily because we accept as another premise the notion that slaves are men.

If we put these premises into circles, we will have a little circle, the class *slave*, which is in a larger circle, the class *man*, which we now have in a still larger circle, the class *what God loves*, which, presumably, includes more than men.

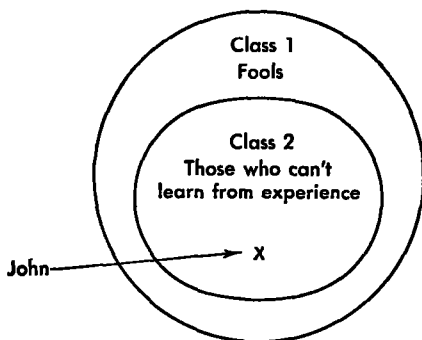


Behind the simple statement that God loves slaves, we have the reasoning indicated in our circles. This, then, is the process of deduction. There are two premises. The first, "God loves man," indicates the relation between class 1 and class 2. The second premise, "A slave is a man," indicates the relation between class 2 and class 3. From those two premises we *deduce* the conclusion, "God loves slaves." In other words, if class 3 is in class 2, and class 2 is in class 1, then class 3 is in class 1.

Let us take another example, the statement, "Even kings die." What is the reasoning behind it? We have the class *king* included in the class *man*, and the class *man* included in the larger class *things that die*; and so we can attach the meaning (*to die*) of the biggest class to the smallest class (*king*), or to any member, to come down a stage, of that class. We can say, "No matter how proud King William is, he will die like the rest of us." In the picture it looks this way:



Let us look at another statement: "John simply can't learn from experience, and anyone who can't learn from experience is a fool." In this case, all we have given are the two premises, the relation between John and class 2 (John is in the class of those who cannot learn by experience), and the relation between class 2 and class 1 (the class of those who cannot learn by experience is in the class *fool*). But we *necessarily* conclude that John is a fool (that John is in class 1). If we chart it, we get this picture:

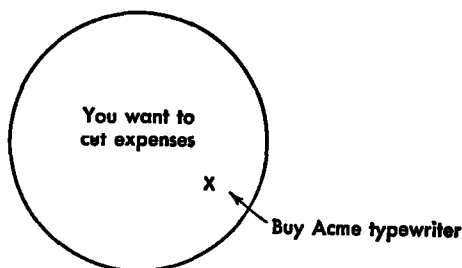


It does not matter whether we start with the conclusion (as in the statement, "King William will die like the rest of us") and have to work back to the chain of reasoning, or whether we start with the premises (as in the statement, "John simply can't learn from experience, and anybody who can't learn from experience is a fool"); the kind of picture we get is the same, a picture of the relation of classes, and in these two instances, of the relation of an individual to classes. The same is true if we are given the conclusion and one premise. For instance, suppose we say, "John is an awful fool. He can't learn from experience." Here we have the conclusion and one premise, but we immediately know that the other premise is, "People who can't learn from experience are fools." And again we have the picture above.

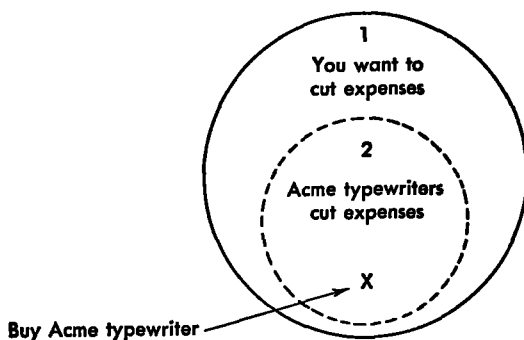
### ■ Application

For each of the following items, state whether we have given a conclusion and premise or two premises. Draw the picture for each item as a fully rendered piece of deductive reasoning. For a guide let us consider: "If you want to cut expenses, better buy an Acme typewriter." We have a general proposition, "You want to cut expenses," and a particular sugges-

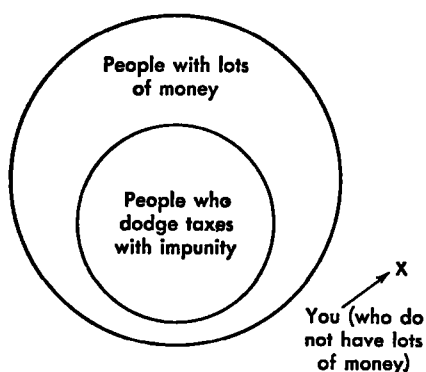
tion, "Buy an Acme typewriter." We can chart it by a circle with an X in it:



But on what grounds is the X placed in the circle? Obviously one premise is missing — which we may indicate by an intermediate circle that will be in the big one and will include the X. Of course, this circle would be, "Acme typewriters cut expenses." So we would have the picture:



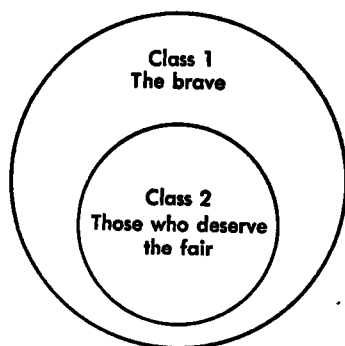
For another guiding illustration, consider: "Maybe people with lots of money can get by with dodging taxes, but you can't." If we diagram the reasoning here, clearly we must draw a large circle for the class of people who have lots of money and a smaller circle for those who are able to dodge taxes with impunity. According to our statement, people who dodge taxes are a subclass of those who have lots of money. "You," represented by X, cannot be placed within the circle that includes people who dodge taxes with impunity because you cannot be placed within the larger circle of people with lots of money. A diagram of this reasoning looks like this:



- 1 One can't afford to be careless of health forever. Sam has been careless a long time.
- 2 Why do you, who enjoy the citizenship of this country, think you should be exempt from the draft?
- 3 At the Battle of Gettysburg, an old woman called out to a detachment of Federal troops who were retreating: "What are you afraid for? They're only men!"
- 4 "I am an aristocrat. I love justice and hate equality." — JOHN RANDOLPH
- 5 "Fools say they learn from their own experience. I have always contrived to get my experience at the expense of others."—BISMARCK

*A caution: statement of premises*

[Sometimes the form of the statement of a premise is confusing. The most ordinary cause of such confusion is the use of a restrictive or exclusive element in the proposition, an expression such as *all*



*but, all except, none but.* For example, the proposition, "None but the brave deserve the fair," seems at first glance to mean, "All the brave deserve the fair." But a little reflection shows that such is not the case, and that it really means, "All who deserve the fair are included in the class of the brave." That is, some of the brave do not deserve the fair. In the picture we clearly see that some of class 1 (the brave) are not in class 2 (those who deserve the fair).]

### ■ *Application*

Interpret and draw the picture for each of the following propositions:

- 1 None but a fool fails to learn from experience.
- 2 Only the brave deserve the fair.
- 3 Only women bear children.
- 4 Democracies alone can afford mistakes.
- 5 All but the foolish seek to know God's will.

### *Slips in reasoning*

[We have just seen that confusion may arise from misunderstanding the statement of a premise. But it can also arise from a slip in the process of reasoning itself.] ✓

Suppose that a lawyer defending a client accused of murder argues: "We know that all good men strive to provide well for their families. They work day after day for that purpose. All good men strive to be considerate and win the love and esteem of their families. They are beloved by their families. Well, I point out to you this man's long record of devotion to his family, and their devotion to him." What is the lawyer up to? He is clearly trying to indicate to his jury that Mr. X is a good man; that is, a man who could not commit murder. If we boil this argument down, it comes out like this:

Good men are devoted to their families, etc.

Mr. X is devoted to his family.

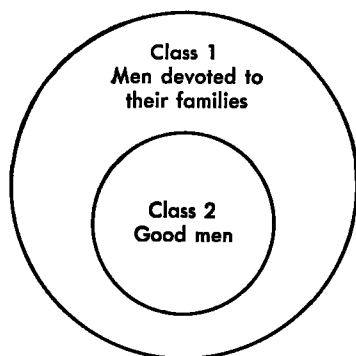
Therefore, Mr. X is a good man, etc.

We sense immediately that this reasoning is faulty. But why?

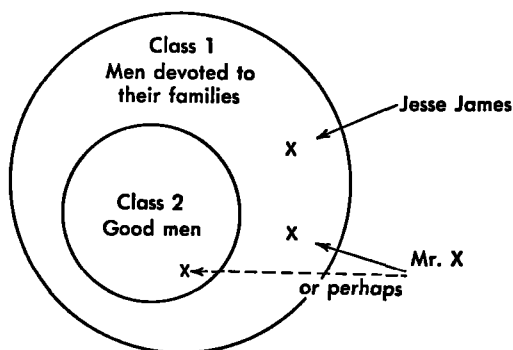
Let us begin investigating the meaning of the first premise. We get this: [All] good men are [included in the class of those] devoted to their families.

Accepting this, we must now ask what the *necessary* relation of the second premise is to the first. The lawyer wants the jury to be-





lieve that since his client is devoted to his family he is *necessarily* a good man. But clearly, since the class "men devoted to their families" is larger than that of "good men," the client may be in the first without being in the second — that is, in the class of good men, who do not commit murder. It is true that this client *may* be a good man, and innocent, but there is no *necessity* in the argument for taking him to be; and necessity is what counts in deduction, *not* probability. A criminal, such as Jesse James, may well be in the class of "men devoted to their families" without being in the class of "good men." So we have the picture:



It is obvious that the chain of reasoning has slipped in the lawyer's original argument. The lawyer, presumably, had set out to deceive the jury by giving the impression of reasoning, hoping that the jury would not notice the slip in logic and would vote for acquittal. But sometimes we slip without meaning to and deceive even ourselves. [There are many ways to make a slip in reasoning. A good check on yourself or on the reasoning of other people is to try to look behind the words and see what is *necessarily* included

in what. The *maybe* or *perhaps* does not count in this kind of reasoning. To be convincing, the conclusion *must* follow from the premises.]

### ■ Application

Which of the following arguments would you accept and which not? Draw a picture to show why. Sometimes a premise or conclusion is not stated and you will have to supply it.

- 1 No member of this fraternity has ever been expelled from college. So, you see, no member has ever disgraced us.
- 2 We, like beasts, are the products of Nature. We are no better than beasts.
- 3 Everybody should seek virtue, because everybody wishes happiness.
- 4 The Stuart family has been distinguished in our history, and Joseph is a Stuart.
- 5 All members of the Stuart family are distinguished, and Joseph is no exception.

### Reasoning by either-or

[There are two other kinds of deductive reasoning, distinguished by *either-or* and by *if*.]

Let us set up an example of reasoning by *either-or*. Upon going into the kitchen and finding the steak on the floor under the sink, we think that either the cat or the dog has pulled it down. Then we discover that the cat is locked in the barn to catch rats. Therefore the dog must have committed the crime. [The formula is simple. We decide on two possibilities. We exclude one. Naturally the other becomes our conclusion.

To get a true conclusion, we must be sure, as with the usual process of deduction, that our starting point is dependable. The *either-or* premise must really cover the case. The alternatives must be exhaustive.] In the example of the cat and dog, if the cat is locked in the barn and the dog is out chasing rabbits, the premise simply does not cover the case. We must investigate further to discover all the possibilities. We find that, after all, it was curly-headed little Willie who pulled the steak off the table and deserves the punishment.

[In the example of *either-or* reasoning just given, the pattern of reasoning may be described as follows: *A* or *B*, not *B*, therefore *A*.

(The cat or dog was the culprit, the cat was not the culprit therefore it was the dog that took the steak ) Can we also reason through this pattern  $A \text{ or } B, B, \text{ therefore not } A$ ? The validity of such reasoning will depend upon what we mean by *either or*. We may mean (1)  $A \text{ or } B$ , but not both (i.e., *or* used exclusively) or (2)  $A \text{ or } B$ , or both (i.e., *or* used inclusively). If we are using *or* in an exclusive sense, the pattern represented by  $A \text{ or } B, B, \text{ therefore not } A$  yields a valid conclusion. If the cat or the dog, but not both, could have gotten the steak, and if we can be sure that the dog did get it, then it is valid to conclude that the cat did not. But suppose that we are using *or* in an inclusive sense, then the pattern of reasoning involved in  $A \text{ or } B, B, \text{ therefore not } A$  may yield a nonsensical conclusion. For example "The man who said that is either a fool or a liar. Now I know that he is a liar, therefore he is not a fool." The truth of the matter may be that the man is foolish as well as guilty of false statement (It is unlikely that we mean he is a fool or a liar but *not both*.) In a case so simple as the last, there is not much danger of our getting into trouble, but in more complicated cases [we may very well get into fallacies unless we check very carefully the sense in which we are using *or*. There is a real opportunity for equivocation (See page 151.) But note that in the *negative* pattern of reasoning ( $A \text{ or } B, \text{ not } B, \text{ therefore } A$ ) it does not matter whether we are using *or* in an exclusive or inclusive sense. The negative pattern of reasoning is valid for both.]

### ■ Application

Discuss the following instances of reasoning by *either or*

- 1 What is not animal must be vegetable or mineral  
This is not animal  
So this must be vegetable or mineral
- 2 Bankruptcies are caused either by dishonesty or by idleness  
John Sutter's bankruptcy was not caused by idleness  
John Sutter must be dishonest
- 3 If Williams told our plans, he is either a coward or a traitor  
We know he is a coward  
He is no traitor

### Reasoning by *if*

[Reasoning by *if* deals with a condition and a result. If the condition is fulfilled, the result necessarily follows.]

We constantly use reasoning of this kind, as in the statement, "If you had banked the furnace, we might have had heat this morning." Fully stated, the argument would go like this:

If you do not bank the furnace, the fire will die.

You did not bank the furnace.

Therefore the fire died.

The reasoning above is correct. We have affirmed the *if*, the condition, and therefore the result necessarily follows. But the reasoning is also correct if we deny the consequence and deny the condition, as in the following instance:

If you do not bank the furnace, the fire will die.

The fire has not died.

Therefore you did bank the furnace.

The following example does not, however, give us correct reasoning:

If you do not bank the furnace, the fire will die.

The fire died.

Therefore you did not bank the furnace.

The result here is not *necessarily* acceptable. The fire may have died because the furnace was not banked, but it also may have died from some other cause. For instance, there may not have been enough fuel. For the reasoning in this last example to be valid, the *if* would have to mean *only if*. Most errors in reasoning of the type of *if* come about because we incorrectly interpret an *if* as an *only if*. Of course, there are instances where the *if* should legitimately be interpreted as *only if*. But this is a matter of the truth of the premise with which we start, and if we mean *only if* we should say so in the premise. ]

### ■ Application

Examine the pieces of reasoning below. Which are acceptable as they stand? Which could be accepted if the *if* were to be taken as *only if*?

- 1 If there is smoke, there must be fire.

There is no smoke.

Therefore there is no fire.

- 2 If you do not stay in bounds, you will be expelled from school.

You have not been expelled from school.

Therefore you did stay in bounds.

- 3 If you leave bounds, you will be expelled from school.  
 You have not left bounds.  
 Therefore you will not be expelled from school.
- 4 If you leave bounds, you will be expelled from school.  
 You have been expelled from school.  
 Therefore you did leave bounds.

### *Premise and the common ground*

- When we first mentioned the word *premise* (page 139), we said that [if we do not have sound premises, our reasoning will very likely give a wrong conclusion. If we adopt such premises as "All college graduates are honest," or "All well brought up children are intelligent," or "Man is either ambitious or happy," we shall get into trouble. Arguing from such premises, we may proceed very logically but still have error in the end. And we certainly cannot start a chain of reasoning to convince someone else unless that someone else will accept our premises.] That "American foreign policy is always wise" we may piously hope is true, but it is scarcely a premise to be used in argument with our allies. In other words, [for any given piece of reasoning — even if it is just one little stage of reasoning in the course of an elaborate discussion — the premises must be accepted by all concerned. The premises are the common ground of a piece of reasoning, as the axioms are for geometry (page 139). Therefore, if we are to argue convincingly, we must start from premises generally acceptable. The most certain way to fail in an argument is to start from false premises.]

### *Fallacies*

- [But there are other ways in which argument may fail. We have already indicated a good many characteristic errors in developing a line of reasoning; for example, in induction a generalization based on too few instances (page 132) or an analogy based on instances different in important respects (page 134), or in deduction the failure to relate classes properly (page 145). Such an error we call a *fallacy*. There are other fallacies not yet touched on, at least not directly, which are all too common in argument. They are *equivocation*, *begging the question*, *ignoring the question*, and *non sequitur*.]

## ***Equivocation***

[Equivocation is the fallacy of using the same term with different meanings.] Here is a well-known example:

Even scientists recognize a power beyond nature, for they speak of "natural law"; and if there is law, there must be a power to make the law; such a power beyond nature is called God; therefore scientists believe in God.

Here the word *law* is used equivocally, that is, in two meanings. In the sense in which scientists use it when they speak of "natural law," it means the recognition of regularity in natural process — the law of gravity, for example. Here the sense is descriptive. But in the second sense it means what is ordinarily meant in government, a command given by a superior authority. Here the sense is prescriptive. Since the whole argument is based on the word *law*, the argument does not make sense *as an argument* if the word shifts its meaning. It may be true that a number of scientists do believe in God, but that does not make this a good argument.

## ***Begging the question***

[Begging the question occurs when an arguer assumes something to be true which really needs proof. One way to beg the question is to smuggle into the original statement of the proposition, consciously or unconsciously, what is really supposed to be at stake in the argument.] Suppose that someone offers the proposition, "The unsanitary condition of the slaughter pens is detrimental to health."

What we are supposed to argue, if there is to be an argument, is whether the condition of the slaughter pens is detrimental to health. But the word *unsanitary* means "detrimental to health," and that word has been put into the original proposition. The question that is supposed to be at stake has been begged. The argument is poisoned before it starts.

[When we encounter such a proposition, we should restate it and then see exactly what is being argued.

The same principle appears on a larger scale whenever we argue in a circle.] For example:

- A I admire Rembrandt's painting "The Night Watch."
- B Why?
- A Because it is a great painting.
- B How do you know?
- A All the best critics say it is.
- B How do you know who the best critics are?
- A Why, the best critics are those who recognize great painting.

Here speaker *A* gives a circle in the proof. He sets out to prove that the painting is great by appealing to the best critics and then identifies the best critics as those who recognize great painting. This instance is very simple, but sometimes the begging may be concealed in a very elaborate argument.

### *Ignoring the question*

✓ An arguer ignores the question when he introduces any consideration that will distract from what is really at stake. There are numberless ways of doing this. A competing question may be set up so that argument is shifted to new ground, or an appeal may be made to some emotional attitude having nothing to do with the logic of the case. For instance, if a man arguing for a Republican candidate shifts the issue from the candidate's qualifications to the praise of Lincoln, the great hero of the party, he is ignoring the question. Or if a Democrat leaves a present question of party policy and begins to discuss the glorious achievements of Thomas Jefferson, he is ignoring the question. Or if a lawyer defending a man accused of murder does not deal with the question of guilt, but argues that the victim was a wicked man or that the family of the accused is worthy of pity, he is likewise ignoring the question.

✓ One of the commonest forms of ignoring the question is to shift from the question to the character or personality of the opponent. For instance, a husband criticizes his wife, and she replies, "Well, you aren't so perfect yourself!" She has ignored the rights and wrongs of the question, her own burnt bread or bad arithmetic or overbid at bridge, and has begun to discuss his shortcomings. We find another instance when we argue that we cannot endorse a certain political measure because the Congressman who proposes it has been divorced or drinks whisky. We have shifted from the measure to the man.

### / *Non sequitur*

✓ *Non sequitur* means "It does not follow." In one sense, of course, any fallacy is a *non sequitur*, because by the very nature of the case the conclusion does not follow from fallacious reasoning. But here we shall use the term to cover certain more special kinds of argument.

For instance, it may be argued: "William Brown doesn't drink or smoke, and so he ought to make a good husband." But it is obvious that a man who does not drink or smoke may still make a poor husband. He may gamble, or loaf, or beat his wife. To take another

example, it may be argued: "Harry Thompson would make a good governor because he belongs to the upper class." We know, however, that belonging to a certain social class proves nothing about a man's ability or integrity. So the conclusion that Thompson would make a good governor does not follow. (A connection has been asserted which does not exist.)

### *Fallacies and refutation*

[An understanding of fallacies is useful in helping us to reason straight, but it is also useful in helping us to locate defects in an opposing argument. If we can point out a fallacy in an opposing argument, we can *refute* that argument, and *refutation* is a powerful secondary weapon for maintaining our own position. Even when we are not engaged in a debate and need not refute arguments made by an opponent, but are simply writing a piece of argument, we often find that we have to refute certain arguments — arguments that we can anticipate or that occur to us in turning a question over in our minds.]

It is not necessary to memorize a list of fallacies to discover defects in reasoning or to reason straight. Many people who have never heard the word *fallacy* can reason straight or locate defects in the reasoning of another person. When we meet the example of a fallacy in cold type on the page of a textbook, we are inclined to say, "Nobody with common sense would commit such an error." That is true. But common sense is not, after all, so common, and sometimes we have to work for it.

### ■ *Applications*

- I Identify the unacceptable propositions or arguments among the following instances, and explain the fallacy, or fallacies, involved in each:
  - 1 The holder of one hand in this poker game is bound to win. Jack holds one hand, and therefore is bound to win.
  - 2 On the seacoast a dying man usually breathes his last just as the tide begins to ebb because the going out of the water takes his strength with it.
  - 3 You should not read the poetry of Byron, because his private life was immoral.
  - 4 Telegrams bring bad luck.
  - 5 No man can live without faith. Faith is the mark of a good Christian. Therefore all men are inherently Christians.



- 
- 6 I am strongly opposed to our participation in any European war, because Washington, the father of our beloved country, warned us against foreign entanglements.
  - 7 The Irish love whisky, and so I am not going to hire Pat McGoon.
  - 8 After taking several bottles of Lightfoot's Liver Syrup, Mrs. Jones felt much better. So Mrs. Smith immediately bought a bottle.
  - 9 This unjust tax should be repealed.
- 11 Locate, if you can, any fallacious argument in editorials, advertisements, or articles that you have lately read. Copy them, and indicate the nature of the fallacies involved.

### *Deduction and extended argument*

[When we finished discussing inductive reasoning, it was relatively easy and natural to set up an extended discussion embodying what had been learned. But often deductive reasoning seems limited and niggling, not suited to a full discussion of a subject. It seems useful only for hacking away at some small point.

Throughout the last several pages we have been hacking away at small points. That is the only way to illustrate what is involved in deductive reasoning. But once we have assimilated the principles, we constantly use them, without self-consciousness, in the development of a discussion.

In much ordinary argumentative prose, we find a series of limited bits of argumentation simply absorbed and used, step by step. We have already seen (page 142) how the full chain of reasoning may be indicated by, say, one premise and the conclusion, or the two premises with the conclusion left to the logical sense of the audience. In this way much argument proceeds, without taking time to develop each piece of reasoning in full. The basic lines of reason may be embedded in the midst of incidental evidence, examples, and other material.]

Here is a student theme in argument. For the moment, ignore the marginal material and read it through.

#### **CAREERS FOR GIRLS**

Recently I read an article by a lady psychologist who argued that all women ought to have life-long careers just as men do. The article did not impress me particularly until one of my friends com-

1. Ballerinas are built in a certain way.  
My friend is not built that way.  
Therefore she won't be a ballerina.

2. If you listened, you must have been impressed.  
I listened.  
Therefore I must have been impressed.

3. You are impressed, either consciously or unconsciously.  
I was not impressed consciously.  
Therefore I must have been impressed unconsciously.

4. Fashion editors dress and live in a certain way.  
My aunt was a fashion editor.  
Therefore I expected her to dress and live in a certain way. (And was surprised when she did not.)

mented that she thought it the most inspiring article she had ever read. On the strength of what the psychologist said, she was going back to her ballet lessons, which she had dropped in her second year of boarding school. Anne is not built like any ballerina I ever saw, but that fact apparently has not discouraged her. Later I heard two girls in my English class excitedly discussing the article. They obviously had also been impressed.

I suppose that the article really had impressed me, perhaps subconsciously, for when I went to visit my aunt last week end I asked her whether she had read it. "No," she said, "but I am sure that I know what it said." And she reeled off all the psychologist's main arguments, almost word for word.

Perhaps I should explain a little about my aunt. She was once the fashion editor of a large woman's magazine. She lived in New York, and she traveled two or three times a year to Europe. When I was a child, I thought that she was the most elegant, chic person I had ever seen. And when I was attending boarding school, her visits gave me tremendous prestige with the other girls.

Last week end was the first time I had seen my aunt in four years, since she married and moved to Connecticut. I was surprised by the change. Her house is pleasant and comfortable in an old-fashioned way but not at all "smart." She is still pretty, she dresses well, and she has kept her figure, but she is by no means a fashion plate.

To go back to our conversation, I asked her how she knew what the psychologist had said. "Oh," she said, "those are the arguments they used to pump into us at — College, back before Methuselah and World War II. That line is strictly old hat."

"But," I said, "it's by a psychologist."  
"That just makes it worse," she said.

5. In a free country women may follow whatever life they prefer.  
This is a free country.  
Therefore women here may follow whatever life they prefer.

6. Whoever does not do what he ought is inferior.  
Women ought to have careers.  
Therefore women who do not have careers are inferior.
7. The most important job is to be a human being (i.e., develop personality).  
A career develops personality.  
Therefore women ought to have careers (to develop personalities and be human beings).

"It's worse to be an old-hat psychologist than any other kind of old hat." Then the baby began to cry, and she dashed off upstairs.

While I was waiting for her to come down, I began to think about what she had said. I realized that I also disagreed with the author of that article, and I tried to decide why.

To me the crucial point in the article is the author's proposition that *all* women *ought* to have careers. Of course, in our free country, a woman ought to be allowed to do as she likes. If she has a special talent and cannot be content unless she expresses that talent, then she should have a career. For example, I know a woman doctor, who is married and has three children, but who has continued her career. She seems to manage all aspects of her life very successfully. (I am not concerned in this discussion with those women who have no choice but to work.) Nor do I oppose the idea that most girls should try their wings a little while and find out what the business world is like. What I object to is the idea that all women ought to have life-long careers, with all that this implies of drive, ambition, and the dedication of their major energies.

To say that every woman ought to have a career is the same as saying that the woman who marries and simply takes care of her family is inferior. She is not making her proper contribution to society. The author, in fact, makes this point pretty explicitly when she says that the woman who does not have a career is failing to do "the most important job of all — the job of being a human being." She is not "fulfilling herself as a person in the modern world," and she does not have a well-rounded personality. The woman without direct contact with the world finds her horizon increasingly constricted.

8 You must fulfill yourself.  
A career fulfills you.  
Therefore you must have a  
career.

But can one rightly assume, as the author does, that there is one way only of achieving self-fulfillment? It seems to me that each woman must find her own way and stick to it, even if it does not meet the commonly accepted standards of success. Then, too, isn't the woman who tries to make her "self" over to conform to someone else's ideas likely to be unhappy? My aunt told me that half the women in her neighborhood are discontentedly trying to live up to a false notion of themselves that they acquired in college. Their "careers" never really amounted to much — a clerical job in a publishing house or bit parts in a Greenwich Village theater — but they feel that they are "intellectual" and that marriage has robbed them of a chance to be another Katharine Cornell or Edna St. Vincent Millay. They are jealous of their husbands or of their classmates who did not marry, and they do not seem to realize that if they had kept on with their careers, they might still be clerks or bit players.

Another reason is advanced by the psychologist for advocating careers for women. She says that a career fills the gap in a woman's life when her children grow up and leave her. Middle-aged women frequently become neurotics, the author says, because they have no careers to fall back on. Here it seems to me that the author is confusing interests with a career. A middle-aged woman should have interests; that is true. She may garden, or work for the Republican party, or head a committee for the church bazaar, or brush up on her bookkeeping to help her husband in his business. She may even take up one of her husband's hobbies, such as hunting. My mother often goes hunting with my dad, and he says that she is a better shot than he is! All these interests are not the same as a career, but they have the same function: to fill

up the gaps in a woman's life and to make her happy

And that finally is what self fulfillment amounts to — to be happy and contented with yourself, to understand and accept your strengths and weaknesses. My aunt, as I said, has spent a lot of time in Europe, and she told me that European women are often happier than American women because, she says, they do not feel themselves in competition with men. Although they may study and work hard to cultivate their minds and personalities, they do not intend thereby to make money or have a career. They cultivate their interests for enjoyment and for the pleasure of being the right kind of companion for a worthy man. Some women in Europe never make public appearances, but they have more to do with making policies than many American women who run for office. According to her, many of these European women feel themselves more a *part* of life than the women here who are always in the public eye.

Now, when I say that I do not believe all women ought to have careers, I am not being old fashioned. I do not want to forbid women something just because they are women. To the contrary, I think it is the author of the article who is old fashioned. She doesn't realize that to be the best possible wife and mother in today's world is the most challenging job a woman can have. She has to know not only the job of housekeeping, but she has to be an alert and informed citizen so that her family gets the best education and medical care. She has to keep up with the interests of her sons and daughters; she has to be able to talk intelligently to her husband's boss when he comes to dinner. I do not consider a woman a very good wife if she is too stupid to know anything about her husband's business or if her daughter is ashamed to bring a

Phi Beta Kappa boy friend home to meet the family.

How do all these fine arguments apply to me? I don't know exactly, for I am not sure exactly what kind of "sell" I have to "fulfill." But I intend to find out before I finish college. Perhaps if my grades are right, I will go on to medical school after I get my B.A. Even if I do become a doctor, I will probably get married, too. Medicine will be subordinate to my family, for a while, at least. But that won't matter to me, because I intend to practice medicine only if I like it and not to have a big career and show the world how successful I am.

Now look at the marginal material. These items represent some of the pieces of reasoning lying behind the theme. As you will see, some of the reasoning is not fully developed in the text. In 1, for example, in the text we have the two premises but not the conclusion. We reach the conclusion ourselves from what the author says of her friend. In 4, the text of the theme does not give the first premise; it is merely assumed. And so on.

Again, some of the pieces of reasoning are drawn from the newspaper article that the student is commenting on and do not represent the student's views. For instance, in 6, the student does not accept the second premise which was intended to lead to the conclusion offered. Furthermore, the student may admit the premises of 7 as individually stated but not accept the reasoning. The trouble here lies in the way the second premise is taken. If we take it, as the newspaper writer tries to sneak it in, that "*Only* a career develops personality," then the reasoning is correct. But the premise does not say that. It may be true as far as it goes; that is, a career does develop personality. But other things do too, and so there would be other ways to fulfill the accepted first premise and become a human being with a well-developed personality.

We have not indicated all the pieces of reasoning behind the theme, but enough to show, perhaps, something of the process.

## ■ Applications

- 1 In the theme, "Careers for Girls," why doesn't the student accept 8 as given by the newspaper writer? Draw a picture of it.

- II Find five more pieces of reasoning concealed in the theme. Do you accept them?
- III Let us forget for a little the deduction implied in the theme and turn to *induction*. The first premise of 1 is a generalization. Do you find any other premises in the eight pieces of deductive reasoning given here, or among the five you have drawn out, that are generalizations? If so, how acceptable do you find them?
- IV We may now glance at the theme as a whole. The student confronted another person's developed piece of argument and at first tended to agree with it. Then she found something wrong with it. She picked the issue on which she would start the disagreement. What was the issue? Did she find any other issues to disagree on? To go back a moment, why did the aunt's opinion make her switch her view of the whole argument and begin to gather her negative propositions? Does the importance of the aunt in the whole process tend to make us accept the very long introduction?

### 7 The weakest link

- [In this theme we can see how deeply embedded the individual pieces of reasoning are in the texture of an argument. But no matter how deeply embedded, each must be considered on its own merits. A chain is no stronger than its weakest link, and we must be careful, when we are arguing, not to insert weak links. The best insurance against weak links is to get the habit of inspecting each link individually, even links that will be concealed in our argument. We must cultivate, as a matter of discipline, the habit of stating the individual pieces of reasoning to ourselves, to see if they are convincing.]

### ■ Application

Turn back to the student theme arguing for elective courses (page 120), and see how many individual chains of deductive reasoning you can locate in it in support of the various propositions. Do they seem acceptable? If not, criticize them and suggest ways of improving them.

## PERSUASION

[In the beginning of the chapter we said that although argument makes the appeal to reason and aims at convincing, the appeal to the emotions, which we call persuasion, may be very important in the strategy of presenting an argument. The appeal to reason and the appeal to the emotions can be distinguished, but both may appear in the same discourse.]

The human being is a unit, after all, and his reason and his emotions are but different aspects of that unity. Even the most rigorously impersonal and logical mathematician, who may be considered the archetype of the rational man, is driven to his work by some *desire*; he feels that knowledge is good in itself, that using his faculties is good, that satisfying his curiosity is good. He is not thinking what his work is good *for*, merely that it is good.

Though all our reasoning is against the broad background of our emotional life and though in the end we want it to lead to satisfactions of the emotional life, emotions may locally, at a given moment, get in the way of the exercise of reason. Then we have a kind of short circuit, and the short-range satisfaction of the emotions will defeat the long-range satisfaction. [So Tom Smith votes Republican (or Democratic) against his long-range interests, just because his great-grandfather fought under General Sherman (or General Lee).] [So Jack Brown hits the bottle to avoid a problem instead of facing the problem and trying to solve it.] [So Susie Perkins makes a joke at the expense of a friend just to please her own vanity in her wit and in doing so loses a friend.]

[Reason should serve to show us the way to long-run satisfaction; but sometimes, human nature being what it is, we have to appeal to short-range satisfactions in order to lead someone to see the long-range satisfaction. We have to make a person feel that the immediate effort is worthwhile. Our problem is to find the way to establish fruitful contact with him. That is the problem of persuasion in argument.]

We cannot expect our ideas, no matter how good they are, to make their way readily if we do not know how to present them. Even the scientist is irritated and put off if he does not find clarity in the discussion he is attending to, no matter how valuable the ideas may be in that discussion. And when we get away from the cold, accurate language of mathematics and science into the warm and confused language of the ordinary world, the way of presenting an idea becomes even more important. [The right way may make our audience willing to hear us out, to listen with sympathy, to give us the benefit of the doubt.]



### *The occasion and the "right way"*

[What is the "right way"? There is no single right way; for what is right for one subject and one audience may be wrong for another. But the right way always accomplishes one basic thing — it catches the attention of the audience by defining a common ground for the speaker, or writer, and his audience.

The good writer, or speaker, is aware of his occasion (pages 12-15), and the occasion involves (1) the speaker, (2) the subject, and (3) the audience. All three are interrelated, and we should ask several questions about them:

1. What is the audience's attitude toward the subject?
2. What is the speaker's attitude toward the subject?
3. What kinds of treatment will the subject permit?
4. What is the audience's attitude toward the speaker?
5. What is the speaker's attitude toward his audience?

As we learned in Chapter 2, if we are addressing an audience already especially interested in our subject, half the battle is won. The writer of an article in a scientific journal can assume that his reader is interested; he is addressing the specialist. The speaker addressing a mass meeting to protest a particular tax bill can depend on his audience. But the writer of an article on a scientific subject or on some theory of taxation in a popular magazine, such as the *Atlantic Monthly* or *Harper's*, has to capture his audience — and capture it quickly.

[Once the audience's attention has been caught, the game is merely begun. Vividness remains important. The audience must be constantly made aware of what is going on, of what issues are at stake, of how the argument moves from one point to another. The audience must catch the sense of impending climax, the moment when the question will be settled. Without clarity of language and organization, this is not possible; we cannot hold the attention of the audience.

These considerations are relative to any given situation, to the answers we would have to give to our first three questions. We might, for instance, catch the attention of an audience which had a neutral attitude toward our subject, but then find that in doing so we had falsified our own attitude toward the subject. The anecdote that might be right for a political article might be wrong for the pulpit. And for some subjects, certain methods of treatment are inapplicable. Even clarity is relative; for what is clear to some people is not clear to others, and some subjects cannot be simplified beyond a

certain point. The question is always, "Clear for whom and clear about what?"

We must, in other words, find a common ground in attitudes as well as in assumptions of reason. And this matter of attitudes we shall discuss more fully in the chapter on Tone.

### ■ *Application*

You are about to write a long theme arguing for some conviction that you hold.

- 1 State the proposition for your theme.
- 2 Analyze the proposition. First, jot down points of conflict between your view and the opposing view. Second, think over your jottings and try to decide which points are the issues on which the argument should hinge. Third, arrange your jottings in an order to give unity and coherence to the theme.
- 3 As before (see page 124), write a paragraph, or more if necessary, on each point of conflict.
- 4 Now criticize what you have written to see whether (a) the evidence seems reliable and (b) the reasoning free of fallacies.
- 5 Try to establish transitions between the treatment of the various points, keeping in mind that your obligation is to refer each point to the main contention of your theme, the main proposition.
- 6 Now think of your introduction. What makes this topic worth arguing about now? What kind of people are you writing for? Can you depend on an interested and sympathetic hearing, or must you gain attention? If you have to gain attention, how will you go about it? After you have thought about these matters and written a first draft of your introduction, do you think it necessary to go back and revise the discussion in the body of your theme to make it better adapted to your audience?
- 7 The conclusion is the last impression that you leave on your reader. Do you really return here to your key point, showing how your whole argument bears on it, supports it? Do you leave your reader with a sympathetic feeling toward your endeavor, even if you cannot be sure of having totally convinced him by reason?
- 8 Here are some subjects that may be useful as suggestions.

But don't take one unless you feel some interest in it and conviction about it. If nothing here appeals to you, you may find an article or an editorial that provokes you to reply. Sometimes a piece of writing is a convenient provocation for a theme; for the issues the writer seems to hang his argument on may indicate the points that you should try to attack most strenuously. In other words, part of the analysis of the proposition has already been done for you by the adversary you select. But don't rely completely on his analysis. You may be better at the analysis than he, and he may have tried to conceal the weak points in his position.

One of the following propositions may suggest a topic for your theme:

American policy in Cuba has been shortsighted.

College football has exploited the student.

The trend toward conformity threatens to stifle intellectual vigor in this country.

Congress should abolish the custom of assigning committee chairmanships on the basis of seniority.

Our foreign policy depends too heavily upon our friendship with Western European countries.

A healthy regionalism would improve the culture of this country.

New York, as our needed cultural capital, exercises a healthful influence on the arts.

Abolish the draft and build a first-rate professional army.

The adolescence of our young people is too prolonged.

## Chapter Seven

### Description

[*Description*, as we shall understand the word here, is the kind of discourse concerned with the impression that the world makes on our senses. It is concerned with indicating the qualities of objects, persons, conditions, and actions. It aims to suggest to the imagination the thing as it comes immediately to an observer. We call this kind of description *suggestive* to distinguish it from technical description, which is really a form of exposition.] We have already given (pages 82-83) some discussion of the difference between technical description and suggestive description, but let us return to it, with new and more elaborate examples.

#### TECHNICAL:

The West Indies stand in a warm sea, and the trade winds, warmed and moistened by this sea, blow across all of them. These are the two great primary geographic facts about this group of islands whose area is but little larger than that of Great Britain.

These trade winds, always warm, but nevertheless refreshing sea breezes, blow mostly from the east or northeast. Thus one side of every island is windward, and the other side is leeward. The third great geographical fact about these islands is that most of them are mountainous, giving to the windward sides much more rain than the leeward sides receive. This makes great differences in climate within short distances, a thing quite unknown in the eastern half of the United States, where our slowly whirling cyclonic winds blow in quick succession from all directions upon every spot of territory. Thus both sides of the Appalachian Mountains are nearly alike in their rainfall, forest growth, and productive possibilities. On the contrary, the West Indian mountains have different worlds on their different slopes. The eastern or windward side, cloud-bathed and eternally showered upon, is damp and dripping. There are jungles with velvety green ferns, and

forests with huge trees. The rainbow is a prominent feature of the tropic landscape. On the windward side one receives a striking impression of lush vegetation. On the leeward side of the very same ridge and only a few miles distant there is another kind of world, the world of scanty rainfall, with all its devastating consequences to vegetation. A fourth great geographic fact is the division of these islands into two great arcs, an outer arc of limestone and an inner arc of volcanic islands. The limestone areas are low. The volcanic areas are from moderately high to very high. Some islands have both the limestone and the volcanic features.

— J. RUSSELL SMITH and M. OGDEN PHILLIPS *North America*

#### SUGGESTIVE

Take five and twenty heaps of cinders dumped here and there in an outside city lot, imagine some of them magnified into mountains, and the vacant lot the sea, and you will have a fit idea of the general aspect of the Encantadas, or Enchanted Isles. A group rather of extinct volcanoes than of isles, looking much as the world at large might, after a penal conflagration. . .

It is to be doubted whether any spot on earth can, in desolation, furnish a parallel to this group. Abandoned cemeteries of long ago, old cities by piecemeal tumbling to their ruin, these are melancholy enough, but like all else which has once been associated with humanity they still awaken in us some thought of sympathy, however sad. Hence, even the Dead Sea, along with whatever other emotions it may at times inspire, does not fail to touch in the pilgrim some of his less unpleasurable feelings. . .

In many places the coast is rock bound, or more properly, clinker bound, tumbled masses of blackish or greenish stuff like the dross of an iron furnace, forming dark clefts and caves here and there, into which a ceaseless sea pours a fury of foam, overhanging them with a swirl of grey, haggard mist, amidst which sail screaming flights of unearthly birds heightening the dismal din. However calm the sea with out, there is no rest for these swells and those rocks, they lash and are lashed, even when the outer ocean is most at peace with itself. On the oppressive, clouded days such as are peculiar to this part of the watery Equator, the dark vitrified masses, many of which raise themselves among white whirlpools and breakers in detached and perilous places off the shore, present a most Plutonian sight. In no world but a fallen one could such lands exist.

— HERMAN MELVILLE "The Encantadas,  
or Enchanted Isles," *The Piazza Tales*

The first of these passages, from a geography of North America, lists four "great geographic" facts and then indicates their influence upon climate, vegetation, and appearance of the landscape. There are occasional, and feeble, attempts to make the reader see the

islands, as for instance in the phrases "cloud-bathed" and "velvety green ferns," but the tendency is to give generalized information. For instance, concerning the rainbow, instead of giving us images which would stir our imaginations, the writers simply say, "The rainbow is a prominent feature of the tropic landscape." Or, instead of picturing for us the arid slopes of the leeward side of the mountains, the writers simply offer the phrase "all its devastating consequences to vegetation." The purpose of the description, then, is to present information; the chief structural features of the islands are identified, so that we may understand various other facts about the islands.

The second passage, like the first, is the description of a group of tropic islands. But Melville, the author, is not concerned to give us a list of the great geographic facts and their consequences. His description naturally involves some of these facts, but the passage is not organized about an enumeration of them. It is organized in such a way as to return the reader continually to the sense of loneliness, ruin, and desolation which characterizes the islands. He wants to give the reader an impression of the islands, a feeling for them, rather than a systematic analysis of their characteristics.

We do not expect to write like Melville, but if we examine some of the principles used by a great writer, we may be able to adapt them to our own more modest and ordinary needs. The principles of a good theme are the same as those Melville, or any of the other famous writers whom we shall look at, uses in his work. It is the principles we are concerned with, not mere imitation. Imitation is useful only if it makes us aware of principles.

### *Suggestive description and the senses*

[Suggestive description tells what impression the world makes on our senses. The apple is red, tweed is rough, lilies are fragrant. But these are crude and general bits of description and do not make us vividly aware of this apple or tweed or lily. A good writer would not be satisfied with this kind of description. He would want to make sharper discriminations. But to do so he would have to cultivate his power of observation. Even when he is writing of an imagined object rather than a real one, he will have to call on the store of impressions drawn from actual observation. Observation gives us our sense of the world.

Indeed, a person who wants to become a good writer should make some effort to train his powers of observation and to expand his vocabulary, especially in words that indicate differences in per-

ception. He must tie his perceptions and his words together. The loud noise must cease to be loud noise for him and must become the crash, the bang, the thud, the clatter, the clash, the boom, the bong, the clang, the howl, the wail, the scream, or whatever most vividly presents the thing he has heard. And this applies equally to the other senses, for all the senses are important to the writer who wants to give a clear picture of the world.

Here are two bits of description, each one primarily concerned with impressions of a single sense. Note the discriminations made in each passage and the language used to record the observation.

To tell when the scythe is sharp enough this is the rule. First the stone clangs and grinds against the iron harshly; then it rings musically to one note; then, at last, it purrs as though the iron and stone were exactly suited. When you hear this, your scythe is sharp enough; and I, when I heard it that June dawn, with everything quite silent except the birds, let down the scythe and bent myself to mow.

— HILAIRE BELLOC: "The Mowing of a Field," *Hills and the Sea*

When I think of hills, I think of the upward strength I tread upon. When water is the object of my thought, I feel the cool shock of the plunge and the quick yielding of the waves that crisp and curl and ripple about my body. The pleasing changes of rough and smooth, pliant and rigid, curved and straight in the bark and branches of a tree give the truth to my hand. The immovable rock, with its juts and warped surfaces, bends beneath my fingers into all manner of grooves and hollows. The bulge of a watermelon and the puffed-up rotundities of squashes that sprout, bud, and ripen in that strange garden planted somewhere behind my finger tips are the ludicrous in my tactual memory and imagination.

— HELEN KELLER: *The World I Live In*

In the first of these selections the sense of hearing is dominant; in the second, the sense of touch. But in the latter selection, which comes from a remarkable book written by a woman blind and deaf almost from birth, we also find temperature and pressure and strain: the coolness of water and the "upward strength" of the hill.

[Ordinarily, however, we do not depend on one sense exclusively to give us our feeling of the world, because if we do, we tend to have one adjective tied to one noun, and the effect becomes mechanical and tiresome. It is tiresome because it is not letting the reader get a full sense of things.] If we say, "The apple is red," we are not giving a very good impression of the apple. The apple is not only red; it is slick-looking and juicy-looking and fragrant. Our response to the apple is more massive than the response of one sense alone. If we say "slick-looking," we bring in another sense, touch. Or with "juicy-looking" we bring in taste. And sometimes with a single

word we may evoke a whole series of different qualities, all at the same time — as, for example, if we say, "The ice is glassy," with the word *glassy* we evoke slickness, hardness, transparency, brightness. Or if we say "The clouds were cottony," the adjective evokes the texture as well as the appearance of cotton wool. [Though description may occasionally confine itself to a single sense — and the sense of sight is the one we use most fully — description usually tries to give an impression of the fullness or massiveness of perception.]

The use of description is not a trick we learn. It is our natural instinct to tell how things really are, how they really strike us. If we study description systematically, as we are now about to do, we are simply developing our natural instinct for observing the world around us and for communicating our observations to others.

### *Uses of suggestive description*

[In our study of exposition, we say (page 82) that technical description is concerned with providing information *about* things, and we distinguish it from suggestive description, which is not concerned with information *about* things but with the direct presentation of things. These two kinds of description correspond, we may say, to the two kinds of motives that may underlie our use of description.

We may think of this distinction as the fundamental distinction between the motive of the scientist and the motive of the artist. The scientist appeals to our interest *about* the world and to our interest in explanations of the world. He is concerned with the general laws of nature. The artist (of every kind — painter, poet, novelist, musician, and so on), on the other hand, appeals to our interest in the direct experience of the world. He is concerned with particulars as they strike him — particular experiences, particular objects. This is not to say that the artist may not be also concerned with generalizations — generalizations, for example, about human behavior. But the artist tends to approach even generalizations through the presentation of particulars. The novelist, for example, embodies his generalizations about human conduct in a particular story about a particular man, Sydney Carton or Silas Marner.]

[This distinction between the two kinds of motives means that we find technical description characteristically in scientific writing and suggestive description characteristically in the work of literary artists — poets or essayists or fiction writers.] For instance, the geographers describing the West Indies in our first example are writing as scientists. They want to give *information about* the climate, vegetation, and so on, of the islands. Melville, describing his islands, is



writing as an artist; he wants to give us the direct *impression* of the place and indicate to us how we might feel if we saw it.

[All of this does not mean that we find technical description only in scientific works and suggestive description only in artistic works.] Technical description may occur in a letter, an essay, a guidebook, a history, an advertisement — wherever and whenever the impulse appears to give information about an object. By the same token, suggestive description may occur in any piece of writing at any point where the impulse for immediacy and vividness comes into play. [Sometimes, both types appear in the same piece of writing.]

### ■ *Application*

You have just read the description of the West Indies by the geographers and the description of the Encantadas by Melville. Turn back to the chapter on Exposition and read the realtor's advertisement of a house and the corresponding piece of suggestive description of the house in the letter (page 82). Also, glance again at the section on comparison and contrast in which we discussed how a thing may be regarded as belonging to different areas of interest — how, for example, a field may be regarded by a farmer, an infantry officer, and a painter (page 73). Here, clearly, the farmer and infantry officer, if they had to write descriptions, would give us technical description. But the painter would be concerned with the appearance of the field, with the kind of description that might appear in a familiar letter or in a short story if the field were the setting of an episode.

Now select some object, such as the house, or some spot, such as the field, and write one paragraph — say 150 words — of technical description about it, in whatever area of interest you prefer. Then write a paragraph of suggestive description about the same thing.

### *Description and the other kinds of discourse*

[Not infrequently we encounter pieces of technical description in isolation — an article for a specialist or a technician of some kind — and we often find technical description as an extended part of long works of exposition or argument. But suggestive description is not often used by itself in an extended passage. There are, of course, descriptive essays, but if they are even moderately long, they tend to bore us. They seem static. They “don't get anywhere.”]

Does this mean that description is a kind of discourse that we can lightly dismiss? No, for though it rarely stands alone and though it is usually brief, its effect is great. The vivid stroke of description, small in itself and apparently unimportant, may lend a needed touch of reality and stir the imagination.]

Here is a piece of narrative which has been stripped of all its descriptive elements:

The other waved the cigar, the other hand, in Horace's face. Horace shook it and freed his hand. "I thought I recognized you when you got on at Oxford," Snopes said, "but I — May I set down?" he said, already shoving at Horace's knee with his leg. He flung the overcoat on the seat and sat down as the train stopped. "Yes, sir, I'm always glad to see any of the boys, any time. . . ." He leaned across Horace and peered out the window at a station. "'Course you ain't in my county no longer, but what I say a man's friends is his friends, whichever way they vote. Because a friend is a friend, and whether he can do anything for me or not. . . ." He leaned back, the cigar in his fingers.

Here is the passage in its original form, with the descriptive elements italicized. Note how they give the sense of reality, of the immediately observable world, to what otherwise would be a bare synopsis of events.

The other waved the cigar, the other hand, *palm-up, the third finger discolored faintly at the base of a huge ring*, in Horace's face. Horace shook it and freed his hand. "I thought I recognized you when you got on at Oxford," Snopes said, "but I — May I set down?" he said, already shoving at Horace's knee with his leg. He flung the overcoat — *a shoddy blue garment with a greasy velvet collar* — on the seat and sat down as the train stopped. "Yes, sir, I'm always glad to see any of the boys, any time. . . ." He leaned across Horace and peered out the window at a *small dingy station with its cryptic bulletin board chalked over, an express truck bearing a wire chicken coop containing two forlorn fowls, at three or four men in overalls gone restfully against the wall, chewing*. "'Course you ain't in my county no longer, but what I say a man's friends is his friends, whichever way they vote. Because a friend is a friend, and whether he can do anything for me or not. . . ." He leaned back, the *unlighted* cigar in his fingers.

— WILLIAM FAULKNER: *Sanctuary*

It is clear that in the passage above description is subordinate to narrative. As a matter of fact, [description is usually subordinate when it appears mixed with some other kind of discourse. Nevertheless, without the resources of description most kinds of composition — fiction, poetry, letters, feature articles, reporting, history, essays, biography, speeches, and even certain kinds of philosophical writing

— would be very bare and unconvincing. Description is far more important than its mere proportion in what we read would seem to indicate. And, furthermore, any attempt to understand its principles will sharpen our own perceptions and increase our pleasure in both our reading and the real world we live in.

## THE DOMINANT IMPRESSION

How often when we are trying to tell a friend how to recognize somebody, we talk like this: "Just watch for that nose, it's the only nose like it in the state. Just think of W. C. Fields and his nose, and you won't miss Jack Purden." Or "No, Susie isn't good looking, not if you look close. But you never look close, for she has those wonderful blue eyes. That's all you notice. They're so big and expressive."

When we talk like this, we are illustrating an important principle of description: the principle of the *dominant impression*.<sup>1</sup> Jack Purden's big, bulbous nose (probably with grog blossoms, too) and Susie's wonderful, expressive eyes are dominant features. We recognize the individual by the dominant impression he makes. The same thing may be true of a place or of anything else as well as of a person.

But sometimes the mere prominence of an object is not what is important, is not what catches our interest. Some mood or feeling provoked by the object, even though we find it hard to pin it down to a particular detail, may strike us more strongly than any single prominent physical feature. So when we describe something, we may be concerned not so much with making it merely recognizable with indicating salient features, as with indicating how we feel about it, how we interpret it. Of course, since we are using description, we must present the object, but the dominant impression that we strive to give is a feeling provoked by the object — the mood, the atmosphere. So we use what elements in the object contribute to that dominant impression, and we may even comment on the impression itself.

Look at the following description by Dickens of a country estate in England:

The waters are out in Lincolnshire. An arch of the bridge in the park has been sapped and sopped away. The adjacent low lying

<sup>1</sup> Something like this principle is used in caricature. The caricaturist sketches in the likeness with a few bold strokes and exaggerates certain expressive details. Any good political cartoonist will furnish a simple and effective example of the general method.

ground, for half a mile in breadth, is a stagnant river, with melancholy trees for islands in it, and a surface punctured all over, all day long, with falling rain. My Lady Dedlock's "place" has been extremely dreary. The weather, for many a day and night, has been so wet that the trees seem wet through, and the soft loppings and prunings of the woodsman's axe can make no crack or crackle as they fall. The deer, looking soaked, leave quagmires where they pass. The shot of a rifle loses its sharpness in the moist air, and its smoke moves in a tardy little cloud towards the green rise, coppice-topped, that makes a background for the falling rain. The view from my Lady Dedlock's own windows is alternately a lead-coloured view, and a view in Indian ink. The vases on the stone terrace in the foreground catch the rain all day; and the heavy drops fall, drip, drip, drip, upon the broad flagged pavement, called, from old time, the Ghost's Walk, all night. On Sundays, the little church in the park is mouldy; the oaken pulpit breaks out into a cold sweat; and there is a general smell and taste as of the ancient Dedlocks in their graves. — CHARLES DICKENS: *Bleak House*

All the details are selected to reinforce the impression of dampness, depression, and gloom. The river is "stagnant," the blows of the ax make only "soft loppings," the report of the rifle "loses its sharpness in the moist air," the church is "mouldy," and the pulpit "breaks out into a cold sweat." Note how the phrase "breaks out into a cold sweat," though applied quite literally to the damp wood of the pulpit, actually serves to remind us of a situation that would make a human being do the same thing and leads us up to the "general taste and smell as of the ancient Dedlocks in their graves."

Items that might contradict the impression which Dickens wants dominant are left out. For example, if Dickens had presented the roaring fires on the hearths of the Dedlock mansion and the steaming roasts and puddings, he would have distracted from the impression he wished to make. Undoubtedly, as a matter of fact, the Dedlock family would have had roaring fires and steaming roasts, but that is beside the point.

Dickens, as we have seen, depends primarily on the piling up of details supporting the main impression. Only twice does he use a word that is explicit: *melancholy* (once) and *dreary* (once). In the above passage Dickens has, as we say, created a certain atmosphere. By atmosphere we mean the mood, the general feeling associated with the scene, person, or event described. Here Dickens has created an atmosphere of gloom and dampness and decay.

[We know, however, even as we use these words to define the atmosphere of this or that piece of description, that the labels we put on the passages are too vague and loose to define really the effect that they give. Our defining words do not really define the atmos-

phere; they merely give a kind of crude indication, a not very dependable clue, to the effect that we find in the actual description.

Our inability to define the atmosphere in general terms indicates the importance of the way the author himself goes about presenting it to us. He knows that he cannot create the desired mood or atmosphere simply by using the loose, general words which we have used above in trying to define the effect of the passages. Therefore, he undertakes to give us such concrete details, such aspects of his object as will stir our imaginations not only to grasp the appearance of the object (or the sound, the color, and so forth), but to adopt a certain feeling toward the object.

We have said earlier that suggestive description aims *not to tell* us about its object, but *to give* us the object. It also can be said that it aims *not to tell* us what feelings to have about the object and what attitudes to take toward it, but *to create* those feelings and attitudes within us. Vividness and immediacy, not only in regard to the physical qualities of the object, but in regard to the feelings and attitudes involved, are what the writer desires.]

## ■ Applications

- I From the set of examples at the end of this chapter (pages 186-89), select two that give a dominant impression by emphasizing some prominent feature of the thing described. Then select two that seem successful in creating a dominant impression of mood. In these latter two examples, underscore the details that contribute to the dominant impression. Do you find any contradictory details?
- II Think of some place with which you are well acquainted that impresses you as having a very definite mood. Make an informal list of the items of the place that contribute to this dominant impression. Make another list of items that seem contradictory.

## Selection

[In discussing dominant impression, we made a distinction between features of an object that are impressive in themselves and features that are important because they contribute to the mood or atmosphere. We might say, then, that details in description are important for either vividness or significance, though we know all the while, of course, that vividness and significance tend to merge.

But in any case, the vividness and significance of details are what make us select them in a piece of description. The power of observation, as we have said, is essential, but we cannot merely accumulate details. We must choose the telling ones. Description works by *selection*, and when we are studying description, we ought to get the habit of asking ourselves, over and over again, "Why did he select this detail?" Or, "Why that one?" Or, "Why does this detail stir my imagination, and why does that one fail to do so?"

Let us look at a few examples in which the reasons for selecting details differ.

Here is the description of a town as approached from the sea. The most obvious quality of what is emphasized, the blinding brilliance of light, strikes the observer at the first moment.

But when at last we anchored in the outer harbor, off the white town hung between the blazing sky and its reflections in the mirage which swept and rolled over the wide lagoon, then the heat of Arabia came out like a drawn sword and struck us speechless. It was midday, and the noon sun in the East like moonlight put to sleep the colors. There were only lights and shadows: the white houses and black gaps of streets, in front, the pallid lustre of the haze shimmering upon the inner harbors, behind, the dazzle of league after league of featureless sand, running up to an edge of low hills faintly suggested in the far away mist of heat.

— T E LAWRENCE *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*

[Vividness, however, may be gained by indicating some detail which might escape ordinary observation. In such a case, it is the precision and subtlety of the description that makes the thing being described come alive for us.] John Burroughs, the naturalist, in a passage on the art of observation gives a list of details which would escape most observers but which sharply evoke a series of scenes and moments.

His [the naturalist's] senses are so delicate that in his evening walk he feels the warm and cool streaks in the air; his nose detects the most fugitive odors; his ears the most furtive sounds. As he stands musing in the April twilight, he hears that fine, elusive stir and rustle made by the angleworms reaching out from their holes for leaves and grasses; he hears the whistling wings of the woodcock as it goes swiftly by him; in the dusk, he hears the call of the killdeer come down out of the March sky; he hears far above him in the early morning the squeaking cackle of the arriving blackbirds pushing north; he hears the soft, prolonged, lulling call of the little owl in the cedars in the early spring twilight; he hears at night the roar of the distant waterfall, and the rumble of the train miles across country when the air is "hollow"; before a storm he notes how distant objects stand out and are brought

near on those brilliant days that we call 'weather breeders' When the mercury is at zero or lower he notes how the passing trains hiss and simmer as if the rails or wheels were red hot

— JOHN BURROUGHS *Leaf and Tendril*

The rustling of the angleworms gives a vivid and immediate sense of the stillness, more vivid and immediate than any number of the usual and easily observable details Or take the squeaking cackle of the blackbirds, it is the absolutely right phrase to describe the sound, and because of the accuracy of the observation our imagination fills the sky with the flock of birds passing over Or think how striking are the *hiss* and *simmer* of the train on the rails!

[The process of seizing on either the striking characteristic or the small, sharply perceived detail may lead to exaggeration and caricature The detail, as it were, becomes the whole object] In the following passage, Dickens takes the obvious oiliness of Mr Chadband as the key to the description of his appearance and, finally, of his character

Mr Chadband is a large yellow man with a fat smile and a general appearance of having a good deal of train oil in his system Mrs Chadband is a stern severe looking silent woman Mr Chadband moves softly and cumbrously, not unlike a bear who has been taught to walk upright He is very much embarrassed about the arms as if they were inconvenient to him, and he wanted to grovel is very much in a perspiration about the head, and never speaks without first putting up his great hand, as delivering a token to his hearers that he is going to edify them

— CHARLES DICKENS *Bleak House*

## ■ Applications

- I From examples of description already studied in this chapter and in the group of examples at the end (pages 186-89), indicate some details which are used because they are striking and some that are used because they are suggestive and provoke the imagination of the reader
- II Locate an example, in the selections at the end of the chapter, of the method of caricature or exaggeration (See page 172)
- III Locate, in the examples at the end of the chapter, two instances in which description leads the reader to an understanding of the character of the person described Try to define in general terms the character of the person presented What evidence among the details of the portrait can you find for your interpretation?

- IV Write a brief description (from 250 to 300 words) of some character of your acquaintance. Use the method of caricature, if you wish.

### Choice of words<sup>2</sup>

[Inexperienced writers tend to make adjectives bear the burden in description. An inexperienced writer tends to overload his description with adjectives, with the idea of specifying all the qualities of the thing being presented. Such a writer forgets that suggestion is often better than enumeration and that the mere listing of qualities is not the best method of evoking an image in the reader's mind.] Let us look at the following portrait:

The woman's face was fat and shapeless, so fat that it looked very soft, flabby, grayish, and unhealthy. The features were blurred because her face was fat. But her small, black, glistening eyes had a quick inquisitive motion as they moved from one face to another while the visitors stated their errand.

In that description the writer has piled up the adjectives, trying to specify each of the qualities of the woman's face and eyes. The result is a rather confused impression. Let us now take the passage as William Faulkner originally wrote it (before we tampered with it):

Her eyes, lost in the fatty ridges of her face, looked like two small pieces of coal pressed into a lump of dough as they moved from one face to another while the visitors stated their errand.

— WILLIAM FAULKNER: "A Rose for Emily"

Here the writer has managed to dispense with most of the adjectives, for the word *dough* implies *soft*, *flabby*, *grayish*, *shapeless*, *blurred*, and (when associated with flesh) *unhealthy*, and the word *coal* implies *black* and *glistening*. [The use of a comparison of this kind will frequently enable the writer to dispense with adjectives. But when the writer does use adjectives, he should be sure that each adjective really adds something essential to the description.] Rather than give the list of adjectives above, one could simply say that the face was "fat and doughy."

The discussion above really returns us to the question of selection. But here we are talking about diction — the selection of words rather than details. [Although adjectives are an essential part of every writer's equipment, one can frequently get greater vividness

<sup>2</sup> The problem of diction, the choice of words, is naturally important for all writing and is discussed in detail elsewhere in this book; see pages 249-73.



by using nouns, adverbs, verbs, and verbals<sup>3</sup> For instance, note the descriptive force of the italicized nouns in the following examples

The very smoke coming out of their chimneys was poverty stricken Little *rags* and *shreds* of smoke so unlike the great silvery *plumes* that uncuddled from the Sheridans chimneys

— KATHERINE MANSFIELD "The Garden Party"

And a wind blew there tossing the withered tops of last years grasses, and *mists* ran with the wind and ragged *shadows* with the *mists*, and *mare's tails* of clear *moonlight* among the *shadows* so that now the boles of birches on the forests edge beyond the fences were but opal *blurs* and now cut alabaster

— WILBUR DANIEL STELLER How Beautiful with Shoes

We can see that in these passages the nouns are of two kinds First, there are those which simply point to some items in the thing described, such as *mists*, *shadows*, *moonlight* Second, there are those which involve comparisons, such as *rags*, *shreds*, *alabaster*

[When we turn to the use of verbs, adverbs, and verbals, we find that these parts of speech sometimes enable a writer to get an effect with great economy by fusing the quality of a thing with its action]

In the following description of a Mexican revolutionist who is (as we could know from the whole story from which the paragraph comes) both sentimental and cruel, energetic and self-indulgent, lazy and sinister, note how the details selected are expressive of that character

Braggioni catches her glance *solidly* as if he had been waiting for it, leans forward, *balancing* his paunch between his spread knees and sings with tremendous emphasis, *weighing* his words He had the song relates, no father and no mother, nor even a friend to console him lonely as a wave of the sea he comes and goes, lonely as a wave His mouth opens round and *yearns sideways*, his balloon cheeks grow oily with the labor of the song He *bulges marvellously* in his expensive garments Over his lavender collar, *crushed* upon a purple necktie, held by a diamond hoop, over his ammunition belt of tooled leather worked in silver, *buckled cruelly* around his gaping middle, over the tops of his glossy yellow shoes Braggioni *swells* with ominous ripeness, his mauve silk hose *stretched* taut, his ankles *bound* with the stout leather thongs of his shoes

When he *stretches* his eyelids at Laura she notes again that his eyes are tawny yellow cat's eyes

— KATHERINE ANNE PORTER "Flowering Judas"

<sup>3</sup> Verbals are nouns and adjectives which are derived from verbs.

We have italicized the adverbs, verbs, and verbals that seem expressive. Think how right and unexpected the word *solidly* is as applied to the way Braggioni catches the girl's glance — the sense of his massiveness and imperviousness and, perhaps, brutality, and the sense, too, as indicated in the clause, "as if he had been waiting for it," of his being braced in calculation. Or think of the sense of theatricality in the image of the fat man twisting his mouth sideways in his sentimental song, a song so unlike his real nature. If the writer had merely put down that he had opened his round mouth in song, we wouldn't have much to stir our imagination, the description would lack expressiveness. Or take *marvellously* and *cruelly*, and consider what they imply not only about the visual image but about the personality of the man.

[In the use of verbs, the same concentration of effect is possible; for frequently the right verb can imply something about the nature of the thing or person performing an action as well as about the nature of the action.] For instance, the verbs *yearns* and *bulges* are extremely important. *Yearns* implies the sentimental expression on the fat revolutionist's face, and *bulges* implies the brute heft of the man, in contrast to the sentimental song he sings. So the two verbs here really indicate the contrast in his nature as well as in his appearance. What is the significance of the other verbs and verbals?

## TEXTURE AND PATTERN IN DESCRIPTION

[Thus far in this chapter we have been concerned with the observation of details, the relation of such details to a dominant impression of the thing described, and the choice of words in giving description. We may call the combination of these three things the *texture* of description.

In so far as the details of description relate to the dominant impression, they have some principle of order, and in the last analysis the relation of details to the dominant impression is the most important single consideration. But we also must think of the way details are grouped in relation to the structure of the thing described — whatever that thing is, a landscape, an object, a human face. We cannot simply list details at random, even when they do contribute to a dominant impression. There must be some principle of *pattern*.

### *Pattern and point of view*

[If one observes a person, an object, or a scene, one notes that each has its proper unity — in a flash we recognize a friend, a tree,

a familiar room, a meadow with woods beyond. But if, when we set out to describe one of these things, we give a mere catalogue of unrelated details, a mere enumeration of this, that, and the other, the sense of vital unity is gone.

The reason is not far to seek. When we look at something, even though our attention is focused on some one aspect, we are constantly aware of the totality; it is all there before us at one time. In description, however, the details are presented to us one after another; instead of the simultaneous presentation which we find in fact, we now have presentation in sequence. Since simultaneous presentation is impossible in description, the writer must provide some pattern into which the reader can fit the details if he is to give them a proper unity.

When we are dealing with visual description, which is by far the most common kind, it helps to give an impression of unity if we think of whatever is being described as seen by an observer. We need not specify the observer literally in the description; we may merely imply such a presence by the way we give the details of the description. We simply ask how, under such-and-such conditions and from such-and-such a location, would an observer see the details?

The most obvious and simple pattern is to assume an observer at some fixed point from which he views the whole scene or object and then reads off the details from left to right, from foreground to background, from bottom to top, or in some such way. In other words, we simply take the details as they come in the object itself, starting from some arbitrary point.) In the following example the author is addressing an imaginary companion — the reader — who is supposed to stand by his side looking up at an English cathedral. But though his description is somewhat elaborate, he is listing items in a simple order of observation, in this case from bottom to top.

And so, taking care not to tread on the grass, we will go along the straight walk to the west front, and there stand for a time, looking up at its deep-pointed porches and the dark places between their pillars where there were statues once, and where fragments, here and there, of a stately figure are still left, which has in it the likeness of a king, perhaps indeed a king on earth, perhaps a saintly king long ago in heaven; and so higher and higher up to the great mouldering wall of rugged sculpture and confused arcades, shattered, and grey, and grisly with head of dragons and mocking fiends, worn by the rain and swirling winds into yet unseemlier shape, and coloured on their stony scales by the deep russet-orange lichen, melancholy gold; and so, higher still, to the bleak towers, so far above that the eye loses

itself among the bosses of then traceries, though they are rude and strong, and only sees, like a drift of eddying black points now closing, now scattering, and now settling suddenly into invisible places among the bosses and flowers, the crowd of restless birds that fill the whole square with that strange clangour of theirs so harsh and yet so soothing, like the cries of birds on a solitary coast between the cliffs and sea

— JOHN RUSKIN *The Stones of Venice*

The above description is given from a fixed point of view — an open space at the west front of a cathedral in England [But often we find it more useful to think of a moving observer — either a real one, quite literally specified, or an imaginary one, not specified] In the following example a real person is really climbing up a gorge in Arabia, over the pass, and down the other side. He reports things as he comes to them in his movement

Our path took us between the Sakhara and the Sukhur by a narrow gorge with sandy floor and steep bare walls. Its head was rough. We had to scramble up shelves of coarse faced stone, and along a great fault in the hill side between two tilted red reefs of hard rock. The summit of the pass was a knife edge and from it we went down an encumbered gap, half blocked by one fallen boulder which had been hammered over with the tribal marks of all the generations of men who had used this road. Afterwards there opened tree grown spaces, collecting grounds in winter for the sheets of rain which poured off the glazed sides of the Sukhur. There were granite outcrops here and there, and a fine silver sand underfoot in the still damp water channels. The drainage was towards Heiran.

— T. E. LAWRENCE *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*

In the following description of the main street of a little Middle-Western town, no observer is specified. The details are shown, one after another, not even put in complete sentences, merely listed, jotted down as they were. (This loose method, the use of jottings as a style of presentation, is called *impressionistic*.) The whole effect is as though a movie camera has simply swung over the street, picking up a detail here, a detail there.

From a second story window the sign, "W. P. Kennicott, Phys. & Surgeon," glistens on black sand.

A small wooden motion picture theater called "The Rosebud Movie Palace." Lithographs announcing a film called, "Tatty in Love."

Howland & Gould's Grocery. In the display window, black, overripe bananas and lettuce on which a cat was sleeping. Shelves lined with red crepe paper which was now faded and torn and concentrically spotted. Flat against the wall of the second story the signs of the

lodges — the Knights of Pythias, the Maccabees, the Woodmen, the Masons

Dahl & Oleson's Meat Market — a reek of blood

— SINCLAIR LEWIS *Main Street*

[T]his impressionistic method, the use of jottings as a style of presentation, seems easy, and therefore tempting — we don't have to bother with sentence structure or even with paragraph structure. But the very easiness is a danger. It is easy to be tedious, to accumulate too many details, to lose all sense of structure and of a dominant impression. To be effective in this method we have to be very careful that the details are telling, are sharp, and we must not pile up so many details that the sense of a whole is lost.

### *Pattern by interest*

[S]o far we have talked of unifying a description by assuming an observer who actually sees the details of the object in some physical order — say from left to right, or as he comes to them in moving. But let us assume an observer who is less passive, who brings some strong interest to the thing described. This interest then gives us the unity for describing the object. Here is a man inspecting a bridge he is about to dynamite. The structure of the bridge and the location of the enemy defenses give focus to the description.

The late afternoon sun that still came over the brown shoulder of the mountain showed the bridge dark against the steep emptiness of the gorge. It was a steel bridge of a single span and there was a sentry box at each end. It was wide enough for two motor cars to pass and it spanned, in solid flung metal grace, a deep gorge at the bottom of which, far below, a brook leaped in white water through rocks and boulders down to the main stream of the pass.

The sun was in Robert Jordan's eyes and the bridge showed only in outline. Then the sun lessened and was gone and looking up through the trees at the brown, rounded height that it had gone behind he saw, now that he no longer looked into the glare, that the mountain slope was a delicate new green and that there were patches of old snow under the crest.

Then he was looking at the bridge again in the sudden short truth of the little light that would be left, and studying its construction. The problem of its demolition was not difficult. As he watched he took out a notebook from his breast pocket and made several quick line sketches. As he made the drawings he did not figure the charges. He would do that later. Now he was noting the points where the explosive should be placed in order to cut the support of the span and drop a section of it back into the gorge. It could be done unhurriedly,

scientifically and correctly with a half dozen charges laid and braced to explode simultaneously or it could be done roughly with two big ones. They would need to be very big ones on opposite sides and should go at the same time.

— ERNEST HEMINGWAY *For Whom the Bell Tolls*<sup>4</sup>

### *Frame image*

[So far we have been concerned with unifying description by reference to an observer, specified or unspecified, but the use of an observer is not the only possibility. For instance, a writer may compare the rather complicated object he is describing with something simpler and more easily visualized, and this simpler object is then imagined as providing a kind of *frame image* into which we can fit the details of the original thing to be described.] Here is the image of an arm used to give unity to an impression of Cape Cod.

Cape Cod is the bared and banded arm of Massachusetts: the shoulder is Buzzard's Bay, the elbow or crazy bone at Cape Mallebarre, the wrist at Truro, and the sand fist at Provincetown — behind which the state stands on her guard with her back to the Green Mountains, and her feet planted on the floor of the ocean like an athlete protecting her Bay, — boxing with northeast storms and ever and anon heaving up her Atlantic adversary from the lap of earth — ready to thrust forward her other fist which keeps guard while upon her breast at Cape Ann.

— HENRY DAVID THOREAU *Cape Cod*

In this example, the writer has begun by providing the frame image and then giving the details which are to be set in the frame. [But sometimes the writer will reverse the process, that is, he will first give the details, perhaps a swarm of them, which stimulate and baffle the reader's imagination, and then give the frame image which will suddenly reduce all to order.] Here is a very simple example of the method in a student theme.

My roommate is very fat and sort of bleared looking. His eyes are large and round. They are the palest blue you ever saw, and they tend to be watery and blinking. His nose is shapeless, just a kind of aimless blob of putty stuck on his face, and his lips are so thick and sort of loose that his small mouth looks as though he is about to whistle or has just tasted a dill pickle and didn't like it too well. His hair is pale blond, almost albino but not quite, and it never lies in place. It isn't thick, but it is always scruffed up in all directions. He is the sort of person who is always sleepy and when I wake him up in the morning

<sup>4</sup> From *For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Ernest Hemingway. Copyright 1940 by Charles Scribner's Sons.

and he lifts his head off the pillow, with that bleared look and his face so round, I always think of a moon coming up in a watery haze that blurs its shape and makes it lose outline.

It is clear what the writer has done. He has given the details – eyes, nose, mouth, hair – and then absorbed them into one image, the round rising moon blurred in a watery haze. Of course, the image of the watery moon does contribute something to the dominant impression, the blurred, slow, confused appearance of the roommate, but it also gives a frame for putting the details in place; it pulls them together.

### *Mixed patterns*

[We have been trying to distinguish several typical ways of unifying description and have given examples of relatively simple and unmixed methods. But the methods can be mixed, and sometimes the most effective description does combine the methods.

The use of a mixed method offers certain difficulties to the inexperienced writer. By and large, it is better for the inexperienced writer to try the simpler approaches to his material, at least until he is confident that he understands the principles involved in the various methods and has acquired some skill in adapting them. But in reading it is useful to be aware of what more experienced writers have done. Intelligent observation is the basis of all our learning.]

### ■ *Applications*

- I In the earlier part of this chapter and in the selections at the end there are a number of descriptive passages. List the different types of pattern that are illustrated in them.
- II The following student theme is essentially a piece of narrative, but it makes important use of descriptive elements.

#### GETTING ENGAGED

It had been such a lovely day, perfectly lovely, with bright sun and the ocean as still as the ocean ever gets, a slow swell like somebody breathing in an easy sleep, and instead of waves a lazy rippling now and then that made you think of a cat waking up and stretching in the sunshine, and then dozing off again. Joseph had taken me out in his little putt-putt to the island to fish and have a picnic. After we had fished and come ashore to eat our lunch, we lay in the shade of the rocks and sort of dozed off. At least, I did. I woke

up with a start. Joseph had called me, I guess. It was easy to tell why. Off yonder, beyond the glitter of the water where the sun still struck, you could see the clouds piling up like a cliff, black and slate-colored, streaked with purple. I said like a cliff but it was like a cliff that somehow, momentarily, grew taller while you stared at it, looking awfully solid but somehow swelling and coiling upward at the same time.

It fascinated you to watch it. I couldn't take my eyes off it, and then I sneaked a look at Joseph. He was staring at it, too. He had a funny expression, sort of rapt and awe-struck. And suddenly he looked so much younger than I had thought of him. It was a little boy's face, round and tanned, with eyes brown and wide while he stared. There was a smudge of oil on the left cheek and some white sand had stuck untidily in the oil, against the brown skin.

He jerked out of his trance. "Gosh," he said, "gosh, did you ever!" He suddenly swung toward the boat, fast as a basketball forward snagging the ball and swinging toward the basket for a shot. (Joseph is a wonderful basketball player.) "Grab the stuff, girlie, and come on!" he yelled.

I got in, and he shoved off and piled over the side. He was jerking the lanyard to start the motor. It was a nervous motion, not steady and controlled, with the right pause, like a count between tries. Then the lanyard snapped, and Joseph was looking stupidly down at the piece in his hand. Then he looked up at me. I knew that that was that. One look at his face, and I knew we were in trouble.

Then he grinned. He grinned twistedly, with the lips tightening and a little white showing splotchily at the corners of the mouth, even under the tan. But it was a grin. "Girlie," he said, "Old Joe got you into this, and I reckon he will have to get you out." All at once, like the edge of a knife blade coming down, the grin was cut off. He grabbed the oars, fast all right, but he set them competently into the oarlocks, without any jiggling.

His face was different from what I had ever seen before. And all at once I knew it was a man's face, and I knew the way he would look when he was forty years old, or forty-five, or a thousand. I thought that that was a face I wouldn't mind looking at for a long time.

To make a long story short, we did manage to get in but it was a tough trip. That evening we got engaged.

- 1 What elements of description that we have discussed in this chapter does the author utilize to strengthen her narrative?
- 2 In what ways does her choice of words — nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, and verbals — heighten the effect of her theme?



**3** How might you improve the descriptive elements of this theme?

**III** Description, as we have said, rarely appears in an extended form. Here are two exercises for description in a limited, incidental form:

**1** You are now sitting in a room. Look at your extreme left, then turn your eyes slowly from left to right. What do you see? Describe what you see, nothing more, nothing less, in order, in perhaps 100 to 150 words. What impression, what mood if any, seems dominant as you read your paragraph? What mood or impression strikes you as you look about you again? Revise what you have written with this in mind.

**2** Think of your home town, your home block, or some familiar spot. Imagine that you are approaching it. What do you see, item by item, and in what order? What feelings and ideas suggest themselves as you imagine approaching the scene? Write a paragraph or two of description, with the objects and your feelings in mind.

**IV** This exercise comes much later, a day or a week later. You now have your grade on the work requested above. Read over what you have written, and at the same time try to remember your imagined subject and your feelings about your subject. Would the words now before you give you an impression of that subject and of your feelings about the subject? Be honest with yourself. If you are dissatisfied with what you have written, how would you now improve it?

### *Examples*

On the following pages are a number of examples of description. These have already been referred to under Applications, and your instructor may frame new problems for investigation. For review, however, the following suggestions may be helpful:

1. Locate instances of appeals to different senses. What words, phrases, and comparisons make such appeals?
2. Find instances of several types of pattern.
3. Are there any instances of caricature?
4. In instances where description is used to suggest a character, an atmosphere, or a state of feeling, try to state in your own

words what the character, atmosphere, or state of feeling is. What details contribute to your impression?

5. Locate a number of comparisons. Which are used for vividness? Which are used for interpretation? Are there any that seem too strained to be effective? Are there any that seem stale? ]

A. A knot of country boys, gabbling at one another like starlings, shrilled a cheer as we came rattling over a stone bridge beneath which a stream shallowly washed its bank of osiers.

— WALTER DE LA MARE: *Memoirs of a Midget*

B. Charmian is a hatchet faced, terra cotta colored little goblin, swift in her movements, and neatly finished at the hands and feet.

— GEORGE BERNARD SHAW: *Caesar and Cleopatra*

C. Without being robust, her health was perfect, her needlework exquisite, her temper equable and calm; she loved and was loved by her girlfriends, she read romantic verses and select novels; above all, she danced. That was the greatest pleasure in life for her; not for the sake of her partners — those were surely only round dances, and the partners didn't count; what counted was the joy of motion, the sense of treading lightly, in perfect time, a sylph in spotless muslin, enriched with a ribbon or flower, playing discreetly with her fan, and sailing through the air with feet that seemed scarcely to touch the ground.

— GEORGE SANTAYANA: *Persons and Places*

D. So the day has taken place, all the visionary business of the day. The young cattle stand in the straw of the stack yard, the sun gleams on their white fleece, the eyes of Io, and the man with the side-whiskers carries more yellow straw into the compound. The sun comes in all down one side, and above, in the sky, all the gables and grey stone chimney-stacks are floating in pure dreams.

There is threshed wheat smouldering in the great barn, the fire of life: and the sound of the threshing machine, running, drumming.

The threshing machine, running, drumming, waving its steam in a corner of a great field, the rapid nucleus of darkness beside the yellow ricks: and the rich plough-land comes up, ripples up in endless grape-colored ripples, like a tide of procreant desire: the machine sighs and drums, wind blows the chaff in little eddies, blows the clothes of the men on the ricks close against their limbs: the men on the stacks in the wind against a bare blue heaven, their limbs blown clean in contour naked shapely animated fragments of earth active in heaven.

Coming home, by the purple and crimson hedges, red with berries, up hill over the heavy ground to the stone, old three-pointed house with its raised chimney-stacks, the old manor lifting its fair, pure stone amid trees and foliage, rising from the lawn, we pass the pond where white ducks hastily launch upon the lustrous dark grey waters.

So up the steps to the porch, through the doorway, and into the interior, fragrant with all the memories of old age, and of bygone, remembered lustiness.

— D. H. LAWRENCE: *Letters*<sup>5</sup>

E. When I say they [the gondoliers of Venice] are associated with its [the city's] silence, I should immediately add that they are associated also with its sound. Among themselves they are extraordinarily talkative company. They chatter at the *traghetto* [landings], where they always have some sharp point under discussion; they bawl across the canals; they bespeak your commands as you approach; they defy each other from afar. If you happen to have a *traghetto* under your window, you are well aware that they are a vocal race. I should even go farther than I went just now, and say that the voice of the gondolier is, in fact, the voice of Venice. There is scarcely any other, and that, indeed, is part of the interest of the place. There is no noise there save distinctly human noise; no rumbling, no vague uproar, no rattle of wheels and hoofs. It is all articulate, personal sound. One may say, indeed, that Venice is, emphatically, the city of conversation; people talk all over the place, because there is nothing to interfere with their being heard. Among the populace it is a kind of family party. The still water carries the voice, and good Venetians exchange confidences at a distance of half a mile. It saves a world of trouble, and they don't like trouble. Their delightful garrulous language helps them to make Venetian life a long *conversazione*. This language, with its soft elisions, its odd transpositions, its kindly contempt for consonants and other disagreeables, has in it something peculiarly human and accommodating.

— HENRY JAMES: "Venice," *Portraits of Places*

F. Ratmiroff gazed gloomily after his wife — even then he could not fail to observe the enchanting grace of her figure, or her movements — and crushing his cigarette with a heavy blow against the marble slab of the chimney-piece, he flung it far from him. His cheeks suddenly paled, a convulsive quiver flitted across his chin, and his eyes wandered dully and fiercely over the floor, as though in search of something. . . . Every trace of elegance had vanished from his face. That must have been the sort of expression it had assumed when he flogged the White Russian peasants.

— IVAN TURGENEV: *Smoke*

G. He was a Mr. Cornelius Vanslyperken, a tall, meagre-looking personage, with very narrow shoulders and very small head. Perfectly straight up and down, protruding in no part, he reminded you of some tall parish pump, with a great knob at its top. His face was gaunt, cheeks hollow, nose and chin showing an affection for each other, and evidently lamenting the gulf between them which prevented their meeting. Both appear to have fretted themselves to the utmost degree

<sup>5</sup> From *The Letters of D. H. Lawrence*, edited by Aldous Huxley. Copyright 1932 by the Estate of D. H. Lawrence. Reprinted by permission of The Viking Press, Inc., New York.

of tenuity from disappointment in love, as for the nose, it had a pearl round tear hanging at its tip, as if it wept

— FRIDRICK MARRYAT *The Dog Fiend*

H Her heart seemed so full, that it spilt its new gush of happiness, as it were, like rich and sunny wine out of an overbrimming goblet

— NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE *The Marble Faun*

I The nether sky opens and Europe is disclosed as a prone and emaciated *figure*, the Alps shaping like a backbone, and the branching mountain chains like ribs the peninsular plateau of Spain forming a head Broad and lengthy lowlands stretch from the north of France across Russia like a grey-green garment hemmed by the Ural mountains and the glistening Arctic Ocean

— THOMAS HARDY *The Dynasts* <sup>6</sup>

J I studied M de Charlus The tuft of his grey hair, the eye, the brow of which was raised by his monocle to emit a smile, the red flowers in his buttonhole formed so to speak, the three mobile apices of a convulsive and striking triangle

— MARCEL PROUST *The Guermentes Way*

K In search of a place proper for this I found a little plain on the side of a rising hill, whose front towards this little plain was steep as a house side, so that nothing could come down upon me from the top, on the side of this rock there was a hollow place, worn a little way in, like the entrance or door of a cave, but there was not really any cave, or way into the rock at all

On the flat of the green, just before this hollow place, I resolved to pitch my tent This plain was not above an hundred yards broad, and about twice as long and lay like a green before my door, and at the end of it descended irregularly every way down into the low grounds by the seaside It was on the NNW side of the hill, so that I was sheltered from the heat every day, till it came to a W and by S sun, or thereabouts, which in those countries is near the setting

— DANIEL DEFOE *Robinson Crusoe*

<sup>6</sup> From Thomas Hardy *The Dynasts* Copyright, 1904, by The Macmillan Company and used with their permission

## Chapter Eight

### Narration

✓ 'Narration is the kind of discourse concerned with action, with events in time, with life in motion. It answers the question, "What happened?" It tells a story.<sup>1</sup> In our sense of the word here, a story is a sequence of events — historically true or false — so presented that the imagination is appealed to. This is not a full definition of narration, but we can take it as a first step.

The kind of narration we are here talking about is to be distinguished from expository narration (page 88), which appeals to the understanding. Expository narration, as we have seen, is the kind found in, say, the account of a laboratory experiment or in the directions for making or doing something. In these things the method of narration is, in fact, used — a process is outlined stage by stage, event by event, in time sequence — but the intention is not that of narration as a type of discourse. Expository narration aims to give information, to explain something. It does not appeal to the imagination. It does not aim to give us a sense of things actually happening, concretely, before us.

The distinction between narration and expository narration may involve differences between the kinds of material being treated, but fundamentally it involves a difference in intention in the treatment and, therefore, a difference in method. Sometimes, as a matter of fact, the same material may be treated either way. Let us make up an example:

George Barton, a poor boy about twelve years old, was forced to sell the mastiff, which he had reared from a puppy and was much at-

<sup>1</sup> We ordinarily think of storytelling as the special province of the writer of fiction, but fiction is only one type of narration, and here we shall be concerned with narration in general—narration as a kind of discourse.

tached to, for two reasons. First, having lost his job, he could no longer buy proper food for a dog of such size. Second, after it had frightened a child in the neighborhood, he was afraid that someone would poison it.

This paragraph involves an action, the fact that the boy sells the dog, but its primary concern is with the causes of the action and with what the action illustrates rather than with the immediate presentation of the action in time. Let us rewrite the passage:

George Barton owned a mastiff which he had reared from a puppy. He loved it very much. But he lost his job and could no longer buy proper food for it. Then the dog frightened a little child of the neighborhood, who was eating a piece of bread. George was afraid that someone would poison the dog. So he sold it.

Here, as before, the causes of the action are given, but now they are absorbed into the movement of the action itself. When we wrote in the first version that George sold the dog for two reasons, we violated the whole nature of narrative — the movement in time — because we made the causes of the action, not the action itself, the primary interest. The first piece of writing is primarily expository; it explains why the boy sold the dog. The second is primarily narrative; it tells us what happened.

[Narration gives us a moving picture, objects in operation, life in motion, the transformation of life from one moment to the next. It does not tell *about* a story. It *tells* a story. It aims to give immediacy, a sense of the event before our eyes, involving us, our interest, and perhaps our sympathy. Description, too, aims to give immediacy, but its purpose is to give the quality of an action, not the movement of the action itself. Action is what narration presents.]

We shall talk about action under the heads of *time* and *meaning*.

## TIME

[An action takes place in time. The movement of an event is from one point in time to another. But narration gives us a *unit* of time, not a mere fragment of time. A unit is a thing which is complete in itself. It may be part of a larger thing, and it may contain smaller parts, which themselves are units, but in itself it can be thought of as complete. A unit of time is that length of time in which a process fulfills itself.]

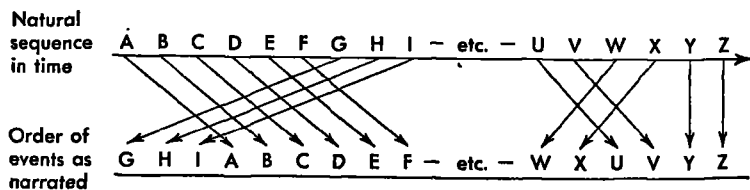
We must now emphasize, not the mere fact of movement in time, but the movement from a beginning to an end. We begin a story at the moment when something is ripe to happen, when one condi-

tion prevails but is unstable, and end it when something has finished happening, when a new condition prevails and is, for the moment at least, stable. In between the beginning and the end are all the moments which mark the stages of change, that is to say, the process of the event.

We move, as it were, from A to Z, A the beginning, Z the end; and every item in between has a necessary order in time. We can make a little chart to indicate this natural sequence in time:

Natural order in time	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	— etc. —	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
-----------------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----------	---	---	---	---	---	---

But we recall narratives which do not begin with the first moment when something was ripe to happen, that is, with our A. For instance, a narrative may begin with a man in the very midst of his difficulties and problems, say on the battlefield, in a moment of marital crisis, or at a time when he hears that he has lost his fortune, and then it may cut back to his previous history and experience to explain how he came to be in such a situation. Such a narrative does not move in an orderly fashion from A to Z. It begins, instead, with G, H, and I and then cuts back to A, B, and C. But we must distinguish here between two things: how the narrator treated the sequence in time and how the sequence existed in time. The narrator may have given us G, H, and I first in order to catch our interest. He may have thought that A, B, and C would not be interesting to us until we knew what they were to lead to. But when he does finally cut back to A, B, and C, we become aware of the full sequence in time and set it up in our imaginations A, B, C, . . . G, H, I, . . . . In other words, we must distinguish between the *way* (G, H, I — A, B, C, . . .) in which the narrator presents an action to us and the *action* (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, . . .) which he presents.



This is a distinction that we easily grasp, for we have long been acquainted with it in all sorts of narration, from conversation, newspaper stories, novels, and so on. But it is an important distinction, because when we talk about action as we shall use the word here,

we are talking about action as referring to events in the *natural order* in time and not in the *narrative order*, unless the two orders happen to coincide.

## MEANING

[An action, as we are using the word, is not merely a series of events; it is a *meaningful* series.] We have already implied this in saying that narration gives us a unit of time, with a beginning and an end. [In other words, the events must be stages in a process and not merely a random collection held together in time. They must have a unity of meaning. This implies that "one thing leads to another" or that both things belong to a body of related events, all bearing on the point of action.]

[In seeking the unity of an action, we must often think of the persons involved. Events do not merely happen to people; people also cause events to happen. People have desires and impulses, and these desires and impulses are translated into deeds. Therefore, human motives may contribute to the unity of an action. This human element, *motivation*, may provide the line which runs through the individual events and holds them together. When motivation does not provide us with the line, we must think of the events as leading to some human response.

If we summarize what we mean by an action, we arrive at something like this. It is a connected sequence of events. It involves a change from one condition to another. It must have unity and meaning.]

For illustration, let us look back at our paragraph about George Barton and his dog:

George Barton owned a mastiff which he had reared from a puppy. He loved it very much. But he lost his job and could no longer buy proper food for it. Then the dog frightened a little child of the neighborhood, who was eating a piece of bread. George was now afraid that someone would poison it. So he sold it.

This is a very poor, dull, and incomplete piece of narration. For one thing, it can scarcely be said to *present* an event at all. It gives us little sense of the immediacy of the event. It is so bare of detail that the imagination of the reader finds little to work on. For another thing, we do not know what it means. It has no point.

Let us rewrite a bit to try to answer the first objection:

George Barton was a nondescript little boy, scarcely to be distinguished from the other boys living in Duck Alley. He had a pasty lace,



not remarkable in any way, eyes not blue and not brown but some vague hazel color, and a tangle of neutral-colored hair. His clothes were the drab, cast-off things worn by all the children of Duck Alley, that grimy street, scarcely a street at all but a dirt track, which ran between the bayou and a scattering of shanties. His life there was cheerless enough, with a feeble, querulous father, a mother who had long since resigned herself to her misery, and a sullen older brother, with a mean laugh and a hard set of knuckles, who tormented George for amusement when he was not off prowling with his cronies. But this home did not distinguish George from the other children of Duck Alley. It was like many of the others. What distinguished George was his dog.

One day two years back — it was the summer when he was ten — George had found the dog. It was a puppy then, a scrawny, starving creature with absurd big paws, sniffing feebly in the garbage dump at the end of Duck Alley. No one could have guessed then that it would grow into a sleek, powerful animal, as big as a pony.

George brought it home and defended it against the protests and jeers and random kicks of the family. "I'll feed him," he asserted. "He won't never eat a bit I don't make the money to pay for." And he was as good as his word. There was no job too hard for him, for he could look forward to evening when he would squat by the old goods box which served as a kennel and watch Jibby gnaw at the hunk of meat he had bought.

Suppose we begin the narrative in that way. We have added several elements to the bare synopsis given before. We know now why the dog is so important to the boy. There is no direct statement on this point, but we see that he lives an isolated and loveless life and that the dog satisfies a craving of his nature for companionship and affection. We also see that now George has a reason for his efforts, a center for his life. In other words, we can imaginatively grasp his state of mind. The reason for George's attachment to the dog, as we have just stated, is given as explanation, as exposition, but in the narrative itself this expository element is absorbed into situation and action. Similarly, the little bits of description are woven into the narrative to help us visualize the scene and George himself.

What should be emphasized here is that the narrative is concerned to make us sense the fullness of the process, to make us see, hear, feel, and understand the event as a unit. Description alone might make us see or hear some aspect of the event. Exposition might make us understand its meaning, its causes, or results. But narrative, when it is fully effective, makes us aware directly of the event as happening.

To return to our little narrative: Suppose we should carry on our

suggested revision to the moment when George sells his dog. Would there be anything still lacking to make the narrative fully satisfactory? Perhaps there would be. Perhaps the meaning of the action would not be very clear. Let us pick it up at a point after George has lost his job and the dog has frightened the child.

George sold the dog to John Simpson, a boy who lived in one of the big brick houses on the hill back of town. John Simpson's father was rich. John could feed Jibby. John could take care of him. No one would poison Jibby up at John Simpson's house, behind the high iron fence. George comforted himself with these thoughts.

Sometimes, however, they did not comfort him enough, and he felt the old loneliness and emptiness which he had felt before Jibby came. But he was getting to be a big boy now, big and tough, and he put those feelings out of his mind as well as he could. He did not work regularly now, but hung around with the Duck Alley gang in the railroad yards. He almost forgot Jibby.

One day on the main street of town he met John Simpson and the dog, such a big, powerful, sleek dog now that he scarcely recognized him. He went up to the dog. "Hi, Jibby! Hi, boy!" he said and began to pull the dog's ears and scratch his head as he had done three years before, in the evenings, back by the goods box, after Jibby had bolted his supper. The dog nuzzled him and licked his hands. George looked up at the other boy and exclaimed, "Jeez, look at him. Look at him, will ya. Ain't he smart? He remembers me!"

John Simpson stood there for a moment and did not utter a word. Then he said, "Take your hands off that dog. He belongs to me."

George stepped back.

"Come here, Blaze," John Simpson ordered, and the dog went to him. He fondled the dog's head, and the dog licked his hands.

George turned around and walked off.

This is somewhat more extended than the previous version. If we stop with the sale of the dog, we have an example of narration, but the reader no doubt is somewhat confused about the exact meaning of the event presented. Perhaps the reader feels sorry for the boy. Perhaps he is aware that poverty is the cause of the boy's loss of the dog. Those reactions may be taken as meanings of the piece of narration given. But they are not brought to focus. The reader may not be sure exactly what is intended. He is certain to feel that the narrative is rather fragmentary.

With the addition of the section dealing with the meeting of George and John Simpson, however, the reader is more certain of the direction of the narrative, of the significance. The contrast between John Simpson, who owns the dog, and George, who merely loves it, gives us a point which is clear even without any comment.

We may observe, however, that more is involved than the mere contrast between the two boys. The dog licks John Simpson's hands, too. How does this fact tie in with what we have just said? This act is, as it were, a kind of betrayal of George's affection for the dog. Another question: What is George's attitude as he turns and walks off? Perhaps the reader senses the boy's resentment at the betrayal. But the writer might want more. He might want a more positive conclusion. For example, he might want to make this event a kind of turning point in George's growing up, a seemingly trivial event which had a far-reaching effect on his life. He might continue:

The next day George hunted for a job. He found one at the lumberyard where he had worked before, when Jibby was a puppy. He worked as steadily now as he had worked in the old days when he looked forward to getting home to feed the dog and squat by him in the dusk, or, if it were winter, in the dark. But he did not love the dog now. He was through with that.

But he worked because he had learned one thing. It was a thing which he was never to forget. He had learned that even love was one of the things you cannot get unless you have the money to pay for it.

These paragraphs give us a positive conclusion. They give the effect of the event on George, not merely the first reaction of resentment or hurt feelings, but the effect which prevails over a long period of time. Neither the reader nor the writer may agree that what George learns is the truth — that money is the basis of everything, even of such things as love and loyalty and kindness — but what George learns is the "truth" for him, the rule by which he will conduct his life for a time to come.

The important thing to understand here is that a point is made, whether or not the reader accepts the point as true. The narrative is complete. It is not complete merely because a summarizing statement has been made by the writer. Certainly, the summarizing statement would not make the narrative complete if what it says were not something which could grow reasonably out of the event for a person in George's situation. Many narratives imply rather than state their meaning. But a full narrative does involve significance, a meaning, a point, which grows out of the sequence of events.

We have just said that the narrative is complete. This does not necessarily mean that George will never change his mind about the meaning of the experience he has had. The narrative might well be part of a long story or novel which showed how for thirty years George conducted his life by the hard, materialistic "truth" he had learned and then found, even in the moment of his practical suc-

cess, when he had grown rich and powerful, that his "truth" was really a profound mistake and that he had to learn a new truth.

To summarize, we may say that the idea of completeness as applied to narrative always involves the idea of an interpretation, stated or implied, of the events narrated. The interpretation may be made by a character in the narrative, as by George in this case, or it may be made by the reader on the basis of the presentation of the material, or it may be stated by the writer. But in all cases of fully developed narrative, an interpretation is involved. This means that our understanding, as well as our imagination, is appealed to, but appealed to through the presentation of an action. It is appealed to because the action has a point.

### ■ *Application*

Write a short narrative, about 300 words, about some experience which taught you something. Here are some topics which may suggest an experience:

You can't tell by appearances  
I thought I was a big shot  
Bark and bite  
Why I kept the summer job  
True friendship  
Brave — if you can't help it  
Hot rod  
Success that counts  
What my father did that makes me admire him

### PATTERN

In the course of time we hear and read many different kinds of narratives — jokes, novels, short stories, anecdotes, newspaper reports — and they seem to have many different kinds of organization. Is there some fundamental pattern which underlies all the various kinds of narrative? If we can find such a pattern, then we have taken an important step toward being able to write good narrative.

At this point let us remind ourselves of a distinction that we have already made — the distinction between the natural order of events in time and the order of narration (page 192) — and remind ourselves that this distinction applies as well to imaginary events as to events which have actually occurred. We must remind ourselves of this distinction because in discussing patterns of action here we shall

be referring to the natural order in time, that is, to the order of the material from which narrative is to be made, and not to any artificial order employed as a device by a narrator.

We have defined an action as a meaningful sequence of events in time. Such a sequence may be real or imaginary, but in either case the events must embody a meaning if they are to be taken as constituting an action. The principle of pattern applies equally well to either real or imaginary action, and in seeking illustrations we shall sometimes draw from factual material and sometimes from imaginary. In both kinds of examples, we shall be asking, "What is the shape events take in order to constitute an action?"

We can answer our question by saying that an action has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Let us try to analyze what is really meant by this answer.

### *Beginning*

An action does not spring from nothing. It arises from a situation. The situation, however, must be an unstable one, ready to lead to change and containing in it the seeds of future developments.

A situation may be very simple or very complicated. In the joke we begin, "Two Irishmen met on a bridge at midnight in a strange city. The first Irishman said. . . ." We have a minimum of information here, but all we may need for the joke. The situation could not be simpler. But the principle is the same as that in an enormously complicated situation; for instance, the situation from which German Nazism developed, a situation that contained more elements than we can hope to enumerate. There was the conflict between capital and labor, the insecurity of the lower middle class, the fear of Bolshevism, the economic collapse and the inflation of currency, the tradition of German militarism, the demand for revenge after the defeat in World War I, the example of Italian Fascism, the personality of Hitler, his bitterness and frustration. An interaction of all these factors and many more led to the unstable situation which worked itself out in Nazism.

Given this material, the writer of an account of Nazism must first present the situation clearly enough for the reader to see how the rest will follow. In dealing with matters of fact, as such a writer of history would be doing, his first task would be to analyze the body of material to be sure he knew what was really significant for future developments, and his second task would be to present the material so that the reader would see the relation among the various elements. It is true that the reader may not understand the significance of the

situation when it is first presented to him, but he must be given enough to go on, to rouse and sustain his interest, to show that there is a line of possible development. And he must be given enough for him to feel, when he looks back over the whole narrative, that the action is really a logical development from the situation.

The problem is essentially the same for a writer who is dealing with imaginary events. The only difference is that he does not have to analyze factual materials already given him but has to create or adapt his materials. To go back to our own improvised narrative of George and the dog, the situation presenting the misery and lovelessness of the boy's life gives us enough to account for the later importance of the dog to the boy.

[The beginning, the presentation of the situation, enables us to understand the narrative. Therefore, that part of the narrative is often given the name of *exposition*. But we must keep the word in this special sense distinct from the more general sense in which it signifies one of the kinds of discourse.]

It is not to be understood, however, that the exposition of a narrative is merely a kind of necessary evil, a body of dull information which the reader must absorb before he can settle down to the real story. It need not be explanatory or descriptive material in isolation or a colorless summary of the situation from which the action stems. Instead, the exposition may appear as an episode, a fragment of action, interesting in itself. Not all kinds of exposition can take a direct form, but in general it can be said that whenever possible exposition should be dramatically presented, that is, directly presented.)

### *Middle*

[The middle is the main body of the action. It is a series of stages in the process. It involves the points of mounting tension, or increasing complication, developing from the original situation. To return to our example of the rise of Nazism, we would find such points of mounting tension as the beer hall *Putsch* in Munich, Hitler's imprisonment and the writing of *Mein Kampf*, the street fights against the German Communists, the election of Hitler as Chancellor, the Reichstag fire, the purge of the party, the claims on the Sudetenland. Looking back on the events of the past forty years, we can see the points of crisis, the stages at which new tensions emerged. If a historian were writing an account of those years, he might center his attention on those stages. They might provide him with natural chapter divisions.]

The same principle applies in any narrative, the simple joke or the elaborate novel. If one is telling or writing about real events, one tries to focus attention on those which mark real stages of development. And if one is making up a narrative, he arranges his imaginary material in the same way. He wants to create suspense, to hold the interest of his audience. If his narrative seems to be a mere drift of events, he cannot hold his readers' interest. He can do so only in so far as the narrative emerges in well-defined stages of increasing complication. We can see this in the little account of the boy and the dog: George gets a job to feed the dog; the dog becomes the center of his life; he loses the job; the dog frightens the child; George sells the dog; and so on.

Just as we have a technical name for the beginning of a narrative (exposition), so we have one for the middle: *complication*

### *End*

As for the end of an action, it is not simply the point at which the action stops. It is, rather, the point at which the forces implicit in the situation have worked themselves out. Whether it is the gag line of the joke or Berlin shattered under British and American bombs and Russian shells, the principle is the same. The end of an action, however, is not necessarily the physical victory of one set of forces over another. It may be the reconciliation of forces, or it may be the fusion of previously opposing forces to create a new force. As a matter of fact, the end of an action may simply be a new awareness on the part of a person involved, directly or indirectly, in the action. We know how we can look back on an experience and recognize the point at which an attitude we held was changed by it.

When we come to writing a narrative, we regard the end as the point where the action achieves its full meaning. It is the point at which the reader is willing to say, "Oh, yes, I see what it is all about." If we look back on our narrative of the boy and the dog we see that if we had stopped with the sale of the dog, the meaning would have been blurred. The reader would not have been quite sure what was at stake. He might have felt sorry for the boy in a vague sort of way. But the meeting with John Simpson and the dog gives us in direct terms, as a contrast, a much more sharply defined meaning. This episode could be an end. We, as readers, see that there is an issue, a question, raised by the narrative — the question of legal ownership of the dog opposed to the demands of affection. The narrative now has a point. If we go on to write the last paragraph, we simply indicate the fact of George's awareness and the

effect on him. By means of George's awareness we have made the point more explicit, but it *was* implicit at the moment when the two boys had their little encounter. The technical term for the end of a narrative is *denouement*. The word means an "untying." With the denouement, the complications are finally untangled and resolved.

### *Examples of narrative pattern*

Let us look at a couple of examples of narrative with the idea of indicating the structure, or pattern, of each. The first is the account of how Robinson Crusoe, who fancied himself absolutely alone on his desert island, found a footprint:

It happened one day about noon, going towards my boat, I was exceedingly surprised with the print of a man's naked foot on the shore, which was very plain to be seen in the sand. I stood like one thunderstruck, or as if I had seen an apparition: I listened, I looked around me, but I could hear nothing, nor see anything. I went up to a rising ground, to look farther; I went up the shore and down the shore, but it was all one; I could see no other impression but that one. I went to it again to see if there were any more, and to observe if it might not be my fancy; but there was no room for that, for there was exactly the print of a foot, toes, heel, and every part of a foot; how it came thither I knew not, nor could I in the least imagine; but, after innumerable fluttering thoughts, like a man perfectly confused and out of myself, I came home to my fortification, not feeling, as we say, the ground I went on, but terrified to the last degree; looking behind me at every two or three steps, mistaking every bush and tree, and fancying every stump at a distance to be a man. Nor is it possible to describe how many various shapes my affrighted imagination represented things to me in, how many wild ideas were found every moment in my fancy, and what strange unaccountable whimsies came into my thoughts by the way.

— DANIEL DEFOE: *Robinson Crusoe*

A piece of narrative could scarcely be simpler than this, but we see that it follows the basic pattern. The situation is given, as are the time and place. The complication follows on the discovery of the print — the first reaction, the looking about and listening, the going to higher ground for a wider view, the returning to verify the existence of the print. Then follow the flight and the terror consequent upon the discovery. And it is this terror, changing the whole aspect of the familiar landscape, which constitutes the denouement. Crusoe's life cannot be the same again. This fact is not specified, but it is strongly implied.



Here is a much more fully developed narrative, the story of Andrew Jackson's most famous duel, the duel with Charles Dickinson, who had made some remarks reflecting on the character of Rachel Jackson, Andrew Jackson's wife.

EXPOSITION:

On Thursday, May 29, 1806, Andrew Jackson rose at five o'clock, and after breakfast told Rachel that he would be gone for a couple of days and meanwhile he might have some trouble with Mr. Dickinson. Rachel probably knew what the trouble would be and she did not ask. Rachel had had her private channels of information concerning the Sevier affray. At six-thirty Jackson joined Overton at Nashville. Overton had the pistols. With three others they departed for the Kentucky line.

Mr. Dickinson and eight companions were already on the road. "Goodby, darling," he told his young wife. "I shall be sure to be home tomorrow evening." This confidence was not altogether assumed. He was a snap shot. At the word of command and firing apparently without aim, he could put four balls in a mark twenty-four feet away, each ball touching another. The persistent tradition in the countryside, that to worry Jackson he left several such examples of his marksmanship along the road, is unconfirmed by any member of the Dickinson or Jackson parties. But the story that he had offered on the streets of Nashville to wager he could kill Jackson at the first fire was vouchsafed by John Overton, the brother of Jackson's second, a few days after the duel.

Jackson said he was glad that "the other side" had started so early. It was a guarantee against further delay. Jackson had chafed over the seven days that had elapsed since the acceptance of the challenge. At their first interview, Overton and Dr. Hanson Catlett, Mr. Dickinson's second, had agreed that the meeting should be on Friday, May thirtieth, near Harrison's Mills on Red River, just beyond the Kentucky boundary. Jackson protested at once. He did not wish to ride forty miles to preserve the fiction of a delicate regard for Tennessee's unenforceable statute against dueling. He did not wish to wait a week for something that could be done in a few hours. Dickinson's excuse was that he desired to borrow a pair of pistols. Overton offered the choice of Jackson's pistols, pledging Jackson to the use of the other. These were the weapons that had been employed by Coffee and McNairy.

As they rode Jackson talked a great deal, scrupulously avoiding the subject that burdened every mind. Really, however, there was nothing more to be profitably said on that head. General Overton was a Revolutionary soldier of long acquaintance with the Code. With his principal he had canvassed every possible aspect of the issue forthcoming. "Distance . . . twenty-four feet; the parties to stand facing each other, with their pistols down perpendicularly. When they are **READY**, the single word **FIRE!** to be given; at which they are to fire as soon as they

please. Should either fire before the word is given we [the seconds] pledge ourselves to shoot him down instantly." Jackson was neither a quick shot, nor an especially good one for the western country. He had decided not to compete with Dickinson for the first fire. He expected to be hit, perhaps badly. But he counted on the resources of his will to sustain him until he could aim deliberately and shoot to kill, if it were the last act of his life.

#### COMPLICATION:

On the first leg of the ride they traversed the old Kentucky road, the route by which, fifteen years before, Andrew Jackson had carried Rachel Robards from her husband's home, the present journey being a part of the long sequel to the other. Jackson rambled on in a shrill voice. Thomas Jefferson was "the best Republican in theory and the worst in practice" he had ever seen. And he lacked courage. How long were we to support the affronts of England — impressment of seamen, cuffing about of our ocean commerce? Perhaps as long as Mr. Jefferson stayed in office. Well, that would be two years, and certainly his successor should be a stouter man. "We must fight England again. In the last war I was not old enough to be any account." He prayed that the next might come "before I get too old to fight."

General Overton asked how old Jackson reckoned he would have to be for that. In England's case about a hundred, Jackson said.

He spoke of Burr. A year ago, this day, Jackson had borne him from the banquet at Nashville to the Hermitage. He recalled their first meeting in 1797 when both were in Congress. Jackson also met General Hamilton that winter. "Personally, no gentleman could help liking Hamilton. But his political views were all English." At heart a monarchist. "Why, did he not urge Washington to take a crown!"

Burr also had his failings. He had made a mistake, observed Jackson, with admirable detachment, a political mistake, when he fought Hamilton. And about his Western projects the General was none too sanguine. Burr relied overmuch on what others told him. Besides, there was Jefferson to be reckoned with. "Burr is as far from a fool as I ever saw, and yet he is as easily fooled as any man I ever knew."

The day was warm, and a little after ten o'clock the party stopped for refreshment. Jackson took a mint julep, ate lightly and rested until mid-afternoon. The party reached Miller's Tavern in Kentucky about eight o'clock. After a supper of fried chicken, waffles, sweet potatoes and coffee, Jackson repaired to the porch to chat with the inn's company. No one guessed his errand. At ten o'clock he knocked the ashes from his pipe and went to bed. Asleep in ten minutes, he had to be roused at five in the morning.

The parties met on the bank of the Red River at a break in a poplar woods. Doctor Catlett won the toss for choice of position, but as the sun had not come through the trees this signified nothing. The giving of the word fell to Overton. Jackson's pistols were to be used after all,

Dickinson taking his pick The nine inch barrels were charged with ounce balls of seventy caliber The ground was piced off, the principals took their places Jackson wore a dark blue frock coat and trousers of the same material, Mr Dickinson a shorter coat of blue, and gray trousers

"Gentlemen, are you ready?" called General Overton

"Ready," said Dickinson quickly

"Yes, sir," said Jackson

"*Fere!*" cried Overton in the Old Country accent

#### DENOUEMENT

Dickinson fired almost instantly A fleck of dust rose from Jackson's coat and his left hand clutched his chest For an instant he thought himself dying but fighting for self command, slowly he raised his pistol Dickinson recoiled a step horror stricken "My God! Have I missed him?"

Overton presented his pistol 'Back to the mark, sir!'

Dickinson folded his arms Jackson's spare form straightened He aimed There was a hollow "clock" as the hammer stopped at half cock He drew it back, sighted again and fired Dickinson swayed to the ground

As they reached the horses Overton noticed that his friend's left boot was filled with blood "Oh, I believe that he pinked me" said Jackson quickly, "but I don't want those people to know indicating the group that bent over Dickinson Jackson's surgeon found that Dickinson's aim had been perfectly true, but he had judged the position of Jackson's heart by the set of his coat, and Jackson wore his coats loosely on account of the excessive slenderness of his figure 'But I should have hit him," he exclaimed, "if he had shot me through the brain"

— MARQUIS JAMES *The Life of Andrew Jackson*

The event narrated above is historically true It had causes running back before the episode of the duel (Dickinson had insulted Jackson's wife) and was to have consequences long after the duel But the writer is not immediately concerned with causes or effects He is concerned with rendering the episode itself, the duel, and through the duel, something of the character of Jackson himself We can see that in doing so he naturally gives his account in three sections — the exposition, the complication, and the denouement

The exposition describes the attitudes of the two duelists as they make ready and gives the terms of the duel The complication seems to have a good deal of material off the point — Jackson's long conversation about politics — but we shall see that even this apparent digression is related to the point the author wishes to make in his

\* From *The Life of Andrew Jackson* by Marquis James Copyright 1938 Used by special permission of the publishers, the Bobbs Merrill Company, Inc

narrative: Jackson's cool certainty and confidence. Then the complication gives the details as the opponents face each other and Dickinson fires. The denouement falls into two related parts, Jackson's self-command when hit and his shooting of Dickinson, and his remark after the event.

Marquis James is using narrative here to make a point, a point more important than the narrative related. He wants to exhibit an aspect of Jackson's character, his iron will. But the essential narrative structure underlies this account, because the action to be narrated had that natural structure. The thing to remember is that events, real or imaginary, in so far as they constitute an action in our sense of the word, fall logically into the pattern we have been discussing. The writer may make shifts of order in his presentation, may add digressions, and may make his own comments, but the essential structure of the action remains.

### PROPORTION

The relation of the parts of a narrative to one another raises the question of *proportion*. In one way this term is misleading, for it implies a mere mechanical ratio in the size of the parts. Actually, we cannot look at the question in that way. We cannot say, for instance, that the complication should be three times longer than the exposition or five times longer than the denouement.

We need to ask, rather, whether the parts are adequate to the needs of the special narrative we are dealing with. What would be a satisfactory proportion for one narrative might be quite unsatisfactory for another. In any given instance, does the exposition give all the information necessary to establish the situation for the reader? Is it burdened with information which is really unnecessary and distracting? Does the complication give the reader the essential stages of the development of the action? Does it confuse the reader by presenting material which does not bear on the development of the action? Does the denouement give the reader enough information to make the point of the narrative clear? Does it blur the point by putting in irrelevant material or by so extending relevant material that a clear focus is lost? These questions cannot be answered unless we are sure of the intention of the particular narrative.

Let us, with these questions in mind, look back at the story of Jackson's duel. To answer these questions we must remember the author's basic intention. He is not writing a tract against dueling. He is not concerned with the sad death of a promising young man. He is not trying to evoke our sympathy for the young Mrs. Dickinson.

son. All of these considerations may be present in his mind (and a little after the point at which our excerpt concludes he goes on to tell how Mrs. Jackson exclaimed, "Oh, God have pity on the poor wife — pity on the babe in her womb!"), but the main intention of the narrative is to show an aspect of Jackson's character — his iron will.

The exposition, therefore, tells merely what we need to know to establish this point: how Jackson took a natural, casual farewell from his wife; how Dickinson was confident in his mere skill, in contrast to Jackson's deadly inner certainty. The exposition also tells us, of course, something about the procedure agreed on for the duel, but this is primarily a mechanical matter. The complication builds the suspense by details of Jackson's journey to the Kentucky line, of how he discussed political questions, enjoyed his meals and his julep, talked with the guests at the inn, and slept well. These things do not bear directly on the business of the duel, and might be considered by some critics not properly part of the complication but an aside, a digression from the main line of action. But they do help to build the suspense and do indicate the qualities of self-control and certainty in Jackson.

Then the details of the actual duel lead us to the climax, the moment when Dickinson's bullet strikes and Jackson reels but recovers and, with deadly deliberation, lifts his weapon.

The denouement falls into two parts, the first presenting the actual shooting of Dickinson, the second presenting Jackson's behavior after the act, his indifference to his own wound, and his final remark when it is discovered why Dickinson had missed the heart. All the way through, of course, we notice that there is a building up of suspense about the outcome of the physical event, but along with this goes the unfolding of Jackson's character, which is summarized by the grim, last remark.

A word of caution should be given before we leave the topic of proportion. In many narratives, one cannot draw a single hard and fast line between, say, the exposition and complication. Instead, there may be some overlapping or an intermingling of the two elements. A certain amount of exposition is always necessary early in a narrative, but we can recall instances, especially of extended narratives, in which the complication is interrupted by the insertion of bits of exposition. A biographer, for instance, may interrupt his narrative to explain a political situation, or a novelist may give what is called a *cutback* to an earlier scene or situation needed to explain a present action (page 192).

## ■ *Application*

Take some subject, real or imaginary, which you think would make an interesting narrative. Make a set of informal notes dividing up the material and indicating the basic pattern which a narrative would take. What would be necessary in the exposition? In the complication? In the denouement? You might set these details and topics down under the proper heads in the order you feel they should appear in a finished narrative. When you have finished the notes, write a statement in a sentence or two giving what you consider to be the idea or point of the narrative to be written. Looking back over your notes, ask yourself if the material indicated would really make that point.

## SELECTION

[*Selection* is as important for narration as it is for description. Skillful selection permits a large action to be presented in relatively brief space. But selection is not merely a matter of saving space; it is a matter of vividness. If a narrative is cluttered, the over-all shape will be lost. A writer wants to present only those details that will clarify the line of action and contribute to his point. No stage of the action should be omitted, and yet no details should be included which distract from the real concern of the narrative. There is no arbitrary rule in such a matter. A writer must keep firmly in mind what his real concern is and judge for himself. For example, in the episode of Jackson's duel, it might seem at first glance that the section about Jackson's conversation on the road is unnecessary and distracts from the real concern of the narrative. But this would be so only if the duel itself were taken to be the real concern. Actually, since the real intent of the author is the revelation of Jackson's character, the conversation on the way, illustrating his calmness and confidence, is relevant to the effect intended.

[Even in a narrative dealing with fact the author may heighten the interest by leaving out merely casual material. In treating the episode of Jackson's duel, Marquis James may have known that after his opponent was hit Jackson actually said more than is given here. The author, however, presents just those remarks which contribute to our awareness of Jackson's character. In dealing with matters of fact, a writer does not want to distort the truth by omissions, but neither does he want to lose the significance of the action by obscuring it behind a screen of mere facts. Certainly, the narrator

is concerned with facts, but primarily with significant facts. When he is dealing with imaginary events, the writer has a freer hand and a greater responsibility; for now he cannot rely on the interest which mere fact as fact can sometimes evoke in the reader. With the imaginary narrative a detail can never pay its way simply because it is interesting in itself. It must contribute to the main business or to the vividness of the impression.

A narrative is more or less immediate presentation of events. Therefore, vividness is important — the detail, the small gesture, the trivial word which can stir the imagination. And the details which, strictly speaking, are descriptive may be absorbed into the narrative effect. For instance, the cut and color of Jackson's and Dickinson's clothes, the kind of woods by which the meeting took place, and the Irish accent of General Overton when he gave the command to fire contribute to the impression of reality. Marquis James is much concerned to give an immediate presentation.

### ■ Application

Take the outline of a narrative which you have prepared in the last exercise and from it write a narrative of some 500 or 600 words. Then criticize your selection of details on the basis of significance and vividness. If you are not satisfied, revise your composition.

## POINT OF VIEW

The term *point of view* implies some of the most important considerations of narration. In ordinary speech this phrase has a meaning different from the meaning of the technical term to be discussed here. In ordinary speech we say: "From my point of view, I think James was perfectly right." Or: "I understand Sarah's point of view, but I don't agree with it." What we understand by point of view in these two statements is an attitude, a set of values, or a body of ideas. We could rewrite the sentences above in these terms and not change the meaning: "According to my set of values (or my ideas, or my attitude), I think James was perfectly right." Or: "I understand Sarah's ideas (or set of values, or attitude), but I don't agree with them." But in discussing narration we shall use the term to mean the point from which the action of a narrative is viewed. ¶

When we use the term point of view in description (see above, pages 179-82), we mean a physical point from which the specified or implied observer looks at the thing described. In discussing point

of view in narration we do not mean a physical point; we mean, rather, a person who bears some relation to the action, either as observer or participant, and whose intelligence serves the reader as a kind of guide to the action. Point of view, then, involves two questions: "Who tells the story? What is his relation to the action?"

In broad terms, there are two possible points of view, the first person and the third person. When we read, "That summer when we were staying at Bayport, I had the most astonishing experience of my life," we know that we are dealing with the first-person point of view. When we read, "When Jake Millen, at the age of sixty, surveyed the wreck of his career, he knew that only one course was left open to him," we know that we are dealing with a third-person point of view. That is, in the first example, an "I," real or fictitious, is telling us about an experience in which he himself was involved; in the second example, an author, writing impersonally, is telling us about an experience in which another person was involved.

[There are, however, certain shadings and variations possible within these two broad general divisions of point of view.

What are the variations possible within the first person? The distinctions here are to be made on the basis of the relation of the first-person narrator to the action which he narrates. Two extreme positions are possible. First, the narrator may tell of an action in which he is the main, or at least an important, participant. That is, he tells his "own story." We are all familiar with this type of treatment. On page 201 we saw it illustrated in the brief excerpt from Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

[At the other extreme, the narrator, either real or imaginary, recounts an action of which he is merely an observer. This, also, is a familiar type of treatment. Memoirs tend to take this form, for frequently the writer of memoirs has not himself played a conspicuous role in affairs but has been in a position to observe important events. But the same type of treatment appears of course, in fiction, the story told by the character who is merely an observer.

What of the variations possible within the third-person point of view?

In this point of view the narrative is given by an author writing impersonally, that is, as a kind of disembodied intelligence before whom the events are played out. What is the relation of this impersonal author, this disembodied intelligence, to the action? In the first place, he does not participate in the action; he is merely an observer. The question then becomes this: "How much of the action does the author observe?" And here, as in dealing with the first-person point of view, we can define the two extreme positions.



One extreme we may call the *panoramic* point of view. In this method the author may report any aspect or all aspects of an action and may go into the head of any or all of the characters involved in the action. His eye, as it were, sweeps the entire field and he reports whatever is interesting or relevant. In an imaginary narrative there is no limit to what may be seen or reported according to this method; the most private acts and the most secret thoughts or sensations of any or all of the characters may be reported, for the author is the creator of the whole. But when a writer is using this method in presenting a nonimaginative narrative, say a piece of history, he is, of course, limited by what facts or plausible deductions are available to him. He cannot be as thoroughgoing in applying the method as the writer of an imaginary narrative, though within the limits of the facts available to him he may do so. Many pieces of historical and biographical writing use this method, and, of course, it is not uncommon in fiction. For instance, it appears in the following scene from Thackeray's novel *Vanity Fair*, presenting the city of Brussels when the false news comes that Napoleon has won the Battle of Quatre Bras, an engagement just before Waterloo:

We of peaceful London city have never beheld — and please God shall never witness — such a scene of hurry and alarm as that which Brussels presented. Crowds rushed to the Namur gate, from which direction the noise proceeded, and many rode along the level *chaussée*, to be in advance of any intelligence from the army. Each man asked his neighbor for news; and even great English lords and ladies condescended to speak to persons whom they did not know. The friends of the French went abroad, wild with excitement, and prophesying the triumph of their Emperor. The merchants closed their shops, and came out to swell the general chorus of alarm and clamor. Women rushed to the churches, and crowded the chapels, and knelt and prayed on the flags and steps. The dull sound of cannon went on rolling, rolling. Presently carriages with travellers began to leave the town, galloping away by the Ghent barrier. The prophecies of the French partisans began to pass for facts. "He has cut the army in two," it was said. "He is marching straight on Brussels. He will overpower the English, and be here tonight." "He will overpower the English," shrieked Isidor to his master, "and will be here tonight." The man bounded in and out from the lodgings to the street, always returning with some fresh particulars of disaster. Jos's face grew paler and paler. Alarm began to take entire possession of the stout civilian. All the champagne he drank brought no courage to him. Before sunset he was worked up to such a pitch of nervousness as gratified his friend Isidor to behold, who now counted upon the spoils of the owner of the laced coat.

The women were away all this time. After hearing the firing for a moment, the stout Major's wife bethought her of her friend in the next chamber, and ran in to watch and if possible to console, Amelia. The idea that she had that helpless and gentle creature to protect, gave additional strength to the natural courage of the honest Irish-woman. She passed five hours by her friend's side, sometimes in remonstrance, sometimes talking cheerfully, oftener in silence, and terrified mental supplication. — WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY *Vanity Fair*

[At the other extreme from the panoramic point of view we find what we may call the point of view of *sharp focus*. The author does not sweep the entire field of the action, but keeps his, and his reader's, attention focused on one character and on that character's relation to the action. Accordingly, the parts of the action not directly participated in by the selected character are not reported by the author. To use a figure of speech, the character may be regarded as a kind of prism through which the action is refracted. Here is an example of the method.

He was hungry for, except for some biscuits which he had asked two grudging curates to bring him, he had eaten nothing since breakfast-time. He sat down at an uncovered wooden table opposite two work-girls and a mechanic. A slatternly girl waited on him.

"How much is a plate of peas?" he asked.

"Three halfpence, sir," said the girl.

"Bring me a plate of peas," he said, "and a bottle of ginger beer."

He spoke roughly in order to belie his air of gentility, for his entry had been followed by a pause of talk. His face was heated. To appear natural he pushed his cap back on his head and planted his elbows on the table. The mechanic and the two work-girls examined him point by point before resuming their conversation in a subdued voice. The girl brought him a plate of grocer's hot peas, seasoned with pepper and vinegar, a fork and his ginger beer. He ate his food greedily and found it so good that he made a note of the shop mentally. When he had eaten all the peas he sipped his ginger beer and sat for some time thinking of Corley's adventure. In his imagination he beheld the pair of lovers walking along some dark road; he heard Corley's voice in deep energetic gallantries, and saw again the leer of the young woman's mouth. This vision made him feel keenly his own poverty of purse and spirit. He was tired of knocking about, of pulling the devil by the tail, of shifts and intrigues. He would be thirty-one in November. Would he never get a good job? Would he never have a home of his own? He thought how pleasant it would be to have a warm fire to sit by and a good dinner to sit down to. He had walked the streets long enough with friends and with gulls. He knew what those friends were worth; he knew the girls too. Experience had embittered his heart against the world. But all hope had not left him. He felt better after

having eaten than he had felt before, less weary of his life, less vanquished in spirit. He might yet be able to settle down in some snug corner and live happily if he could only come across some good simple-minded girl with a little of the ready.

— JAMES JOYCE: "Two Gallants," *Dubliners* <sup>3</sup>

In between the extremes of the panoramic point of view and the point of view of sharp focus there are, of course, all sorts of gradations and mixtures of the two methods. The choice of one of the methods or the mixing of the two is not a matter to be settled arbitrarily, for the method should reflect a special interest involved in the narrative. For instance, the panoramic point of view is well suited to the rendering of some large and complicated action — a battle, a mob scene, the burning of a city — in which the interest lies in the sweep of events. The point of view of sharp focus is suited to a narrative in which the interest is primarily in the psychology of a single character. A narrative may well involve both such interests, and then the writer may mix his methods according to the needs of the moment.

### ■ Applications

- I In the descriptive examples at the end of Chapter 7, what is the point of view in Lawrence's letter, Henry James' description of Venice, and the excerpts from Defoe and Proust?
- II Write a brief narrative of about 250 words, in the third person, with a sharp focus, presenting a character's feelings and thoughts as well as his actions.

### *Narration and the other kinds of discourse*

We have been discussing narration (and narrative) as a thing in itself. But it bears certain relations to the other kinds of discourse — description, exposition, and argument. What are these relations?

We can break this general question down into two other questions:

1. How does narration use other kinds of discourse?
2. How do other kinds of discourse use narration?

<sup>3</sup> From *Dubliners* by James Joyce, copyright, 1925, by The Viking Press, Inc., and now included in *The Portable James Joyce*, published by The Viking Press, Inc., New York.

Let us take up the first question. A narrative may have within it descriptive, argumentative, or expository elements. In fact, any rather full narrative will almost certainly have them, but if the prevailing motive of the piece of writing is narrative, they will be absorbed into the narrative intention.

A narrative presents us with an action. But an action implies things or persons that act and are acted upon. And the word *presents* implies that we are not told about those things or persons but are given some sense of their actual presence, their appearance, their nature. This means that, in a greater or lesser degree, they are described. So description comes in to give us that impression of immediacy which is important for all narrative except the most bare and synoptic kind.

The same line of reasoning leads us to an awareness of the importance of exposition in narrative. A narrative involves an action, and we have defined an action as a sequence of events related to create a meaning. One thing leads to another. There is a connection of cause and effect, or at least the events are connected with each other by means of some idea.

Exposition is the kind of discourse concerned with explanation, with making us understand something, and in so far as a narrative employs explanation to bring us to an understanding of its point, it involves exposition. Some narratives, it is true, may simply arrange their materials so that the reader is aware of the point without having to depend on any explanation, but in any fully developed narrative some element of exposition, even though a very slight one, is apt to appear.

As for our second question, "How do other forms of discourse use narration?" common sense and a little observation give us the answer very readily.

Strictly speaking, description can scarcely be said to use narration as an aid. It is, of course, possible to find cases in which description involves movement — a man's habitual acts, for instance, in a description of a character. But we must keep in mind the distinction between an act and an action in the sense in which we have been using the word *action*. A character description might even involve an action, but our interest in action is so much more vital than our interest in mere appearance that we should probably feel that the description was incidental to the narration rather than that the narration was incidental to the description. An object in motion catches the eye.

The situation, however, is different in regard to exposition and argument. Frequently in extended discourses which are primarily

intended to explain something to us or convince us of something, we find bits of narrative used to dramatize an attitude, to illustrate a point, to bring an idea home to us. Sermons and speeches are often full of anecdotes. The preacher tells his congregation the story of a deathbed confession. The politician tells his audience how such and such a law, which he is pledged to help repeal if elected, has ruined the life of John Doe over in Murray County. The after-dinner speaker tells the club members a joke. But the story of the deathbed confession or of the ruin of John Doe over in Murray County or of the two Irishmen must have a point related to the main business in hand. If it does not have such a relation, the listeners feel that the speaker has dragged it in by the tail, merely to catch their attention — that somehow he has not played fair.]

## ■ Applications

- 1 Read the following narrative from a sports magazine.

### WRESTLING: THE NEW MAN

The new man wore a plain white towel over his shoulders in lieu of a robe. His weight was announced at 240 pounds, his opponent's at 323. The referee, Joe Walcott, a former heavyweight boxing champion, called both men to the center of the ring, and, after a moment's talk, the bell rang and the action started.

The 323-pounder, billed as Cowboy Rocky Lee, reached for the new man's shoulders. The new man fell back, held up his fists like a boxer and the fat cowboy stopped dead in his tracks in apparent terror. The crowd of 4,200 in the Washington, D.C., arena laughed and cheered.

The new man was awkward. When he went down, he fell heavily as though he were not used to falling.

The cowboy pounced on the new man, grabbed his leg and twisted it. Ringsiders heard the cowboy whispering in the new man's ear. It sounded like "Hold on, hold on now!" The new man looked like he wanted to yawn.

It went on that way. The cowboy persisted in mean tricks, villainous ways, but always retreated in terror when the new man held up his fists like a boxer. And always the crowd cheered and laughed at the fat cowboy's terror.

Then the cowboy went too far. While Referee Walcott's back was turned, he rubbed his bandaged hand across the new man's eyes. Then he dropped the new man with an arm twist and punched him in the stomach while he was down. Walcott tried to intervene and the cowboy gave him a hard shove. Again the new man put up his fists like a boxer. He hit the cowboy full in the midsection. Not

hard, but hard enough to put the cowboy down for the count of 10. It was all over. Time: 11 minutes. The crowd cheered and laughed.

Later, the new man talked to reporters in his dressing room. They asked him what he thought of wrestling after his first match.

"It's an honest living," said Joe Louis, boxing's greatest champion since Dempsey. "It's not stealing."

The promoter said he could make Joe \$100,000 a year if he would agree to wrestle three times a week. Joe couldn't promise. He would have to think it over, he said, and talk it all over with his wife.

— From *Sports Illustrated*, March 26, 1956 <sup>4</sup>

Analyze the above passage as a narrative. What is the point of its action? its point of view? Does it have a beginning, middle, and end? If so, point them out. Does it utilize other forms of discourse in the course of the story? Where?

- II Keeping in mind the various points discussed in this chapter, write a narrative of some event you have witnessed.

<sup>4</sup> From *Sports Illustrated*, © 1957 Time, Inc.



***Part Three***  
***Special Problems***  
***of Discourse***



## Chapter Nine

# The Paragraph and the Sentence

So far in discussing the problems of writing we have talked about whole themes. We have focused upon such problems as how to describe the operation of a hi-fi phonograph or how to direct another person through the steps of gluing felt to wood; that is, the problems have been of the sort that require several hundred words for the working out; we have not been concerned with the smaller units of composition — paragraphs and sentences — as such.

There is something to be said for postponing the discussion of the smaller elements. Most of us do not write by painfully building up sentences into paragraphs and the paragraphs in turn into larger wholes. Few of us think our compositions out in that fashion. We write in large units of thought and *revise* by paragraph and sentence. It is easier to deal with the shaping principles of composition when one keeps the larger architecture in view. Nevertheless, the smaller elements should be studied apart from the whole composition. As a unit of thought, for example, a paragraph has a certain structure, achieved through unity, coherence, and emphasis. As a part of the larger structure, the total composition, the paragraph contributes to the unity, coherence, and emphasis of the whole.

### *The paragraph as a convenience to the reader*

A paragraph, mechanically considered, is a division of the composition, set off by an indentation of its first sentence or by some other conventional device, such as extra space between paragraphs. In manuscript it may be marked by the sign ¶. Paragraph divisions signal to the reader that the material so set off constitutes a unit of thought.

For the reader this marking off of the whole composition into segments is a convenience, though not a strict necessity. A truly well-organized, well-written piece of prose would presumably be no worse as a piece of prose if it were printed with no paragraph divisions whatsoever. Printed thus, it would say precisely what it said before. But the reader would certainly be irritated, and rightly so, because the writer had failed to provide these pointers to the organization of his thought. Since communication of one's thought is at best a difficult business, it is the part of common sense (not to mention good manners) to mark for the reader the divisions of one's thought and thus make the thought structure visible upon the page.

Where should these divisions occur? How long should a paragraph be? In answering these questions, let us again begin by adopting the position of the reader. For him, a composition consisting of one- or two-sentence paragraphs might as well be printed without paragraph divisions at all. Segmentation on this scale would tell the reader little more about organization than the segmentation already given by the division into sentences.

Common sense dictates that the length of the normal paragraph will lie between the extremes of very short paragraphs and no paragraphs at all. But this is not to say that an *occasional* very short paragraph — even a paragraph of only one sentence — may not tell the reader a great deal. The shortness of the paragraph emphasizes its importance. Similarly, an occasional long paragraph does no damage and may serve to emphasize the unity of a long passage, always provided, of course, that the long passage actually constitutes a unit. We may sum up, then, by saying that there is no formula for ascertaining the length of paragraphs. Only common sense and the requirements of the occasion can determine how long any paragraph ought to be.

### *The paragraph as a unit of thought*

Paragraphing, obviously, can be of help to the reader only if the indicated paragraphs are genuine units of thought — not faked units nor mere random bits of writing arbitrarily marked off as units. *For a paragraph undertakes to discuss one topic or one aspect of a topic.* Nevertheless, any realistic definition must be rather loose and general. Fortunately, we do not construct paragraphs by applying definitions. In his actual writing, the student will find his best approach is to remind himself that the paragraph is a *part* of

the composition. A paragraph thus has its "part" to play, its own particular job to do, in the larger structure of meaning.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE PARAGRAPH

The paragraph, however, has its own structure, and there are various ways of indicating that structure. One of these ways is to build the paragraph around one sentence, the *topic sentence*, which states the central thought of the whole paragraph. We may think of the topic sentence as a kind of backbone, or spine, which supports the body of the paragraph and around which the rest of the structure is formed. Here is an example:

*The reader of a novel — by which I mean the critical reader — is himself a novelist, he is the maker of a book which may or may not please his taste when it is finished, but of a book for which he must take his own share of the responsibility.* The author does his part but he cannot transfer his book like a bubble into the brain of the critic, he cannot make sure that the critic will possess his work. The reader must therefore become, for his part, a novelist, never permitting himself to suppose that the creation of the book is solely the affair of the author. The difference between them is immense, of course, and so much so that a critic is always inclined to extend and intensify it. The opposition that he conceives between the creative and the critical task is a very real one, but in modestly belittling his own side of the business he is apt to forget an essential portion of it. The writer of the novel works in a manner that would be utterly impossible to the critic, no doubt, and with a liberty and with a range that would disconcert him entirely. But in one quarter their work coincides: both of them make the novel.

— PERCY LUBBOCK *The Craft of Fiction*

In this paragraph the first sentence is the topic sentence. It states the thesis which the paragraph as a whole develops. It is frequently said that every paragraph contains a topic sentence, stated or *implied*. A more accurate statement, however, is that some paragraphs have topic sentences and that others do not, for an "implied" topic sentence is one which the reader must construct for himself as a way of summarizing the paragraph in question. Obviously any piece of composition possessing even a minimum of unity may be summed up in some kind of sentence. The "implied" topic sentence, therefore, is an abstraction — a not very useful kind of ghost sentence. In the pages that follow we shall mean by *topic sentence* only an actual sentence, and though insisting that every paragraph have unity, we shall admit the existence of paragraphs that do not embody a topic sentence.

We have just looked at a paragraph that begins with a topic sentence. Here follows a paragraph in which the topic sentence concludes the paragraph.

The artistic temperament is a disease that afflicts amateurs. It is a disease which arises from men not having sufficient power of expression to utter and get rid of the element of art in their being. It is healthful to every sane man to utter the art within him, it is essential to every sane man to get rid of the art within him at all costs. Artists of a large and wholesome vitality get rid of their art easily, as they breathe easily, or perspire easily. But in artists of less force, the thing becomes a pressure, and produces a definite pain, which is called the artistic temperament. Thus, very great artists are able to be ordinary men — like Shakespeare or Browning. There are many real tragedies of the artistic temperament, tragedies of vanity or violence or fear. *But the great tragedy of the artistic temperament is that it cannot produce any art.* — G. K. CHESTERTON "On the Wit of Whistler," *Heretics*

The last sentence of this paragraph makes a generalized statement of the point developed in the preceding sentences. The topic sentence serves, in this instance, as a kind of summary. Although the beginning and the end of a paragraph constitute emphatic positions for the topic sentence, it may, in fact, occur at any place in the paragraph.

## ■ Applications

I Do the following paragraphs contain topic sentences? If so, what are they?

A Popular amusements had more generally evolved from diversions that were originally available only to the wealthy. The theatre in America had at first been primarily class entertainment, the democratic audiences in the large playhouses of the mid nineteenth century, as we have seen, offering a marked contrast to the more exclusive theatre patronage of the colonial period. And from this gradually democratized theatre had developed the even more popular minstrel shows, burlesques, and vaudeville. But the first appeal of moving pictures was to the masses rather than the classes. They were cheap and popular from the very beginning. The support which in time enabled them to raise their standard of entertainment came entirely from their nickel paying customers.

— FOSTER R. DULLES *America Learns to Play*

B It is odd that American men are so frequently presented in European caricatures of the type, in fiction, plays, and films, as being extremely ill-mannered, loud, rough customers. Such Americans exist,

of course, just as sneering Englishmen, bullying Teutons, insolent Latins also exist. But it has always seemed to me that American manners in general tend to err on the side of formality and solemnity. They are rather like those of elderly English dons and clergymen. The ordinary English are much more casual. We do not take enough trouble, for example, with our introductions. Terrified of appearing pompous, we hastily mumble names or hastily accept a mumble of names, so that our introductions do not serve their purpose, and often, not knowing to whom we are talking, we saunter into the most dreadful traps. The deliberate ceremony that most Americans make of introductions protects them from these dangers and errors.

— J. B. PRIESTLEY: *Midnight on the Desert*

**C** The tower of Caister Castle still rises ninety feet into the air, and the arch still stands from which Sir John Fastolf's barges sailed out to fetch stone for the building of the great castle. But now jackdaws nest on the tower, and of the castle, which once covered six acres of ground, only ruined walls remain, pierced by loopholes and surmounted by battlements, though there are neither archers within nor cannon without. As for the "seven religious men" and the "seven poor folk" who should, at this very moment, be praying for the souls of Sir John and his parents, there is no sign of them nor sound of their prayers. The place is a ruin. Antiquaries speculate and differ.

— VIRGINIA WOOLF: "The Pastons and Chaucer,"  
*The Common Reader*

Look back at the student theme "I Don't Like the System of Required Courses" (page 120). How many of its fourteen paragraphs may be said to contain topic sentences?

- II** Construct several paragraphs, each of which will incorporate one of the following statements as its topic sentence:
  - 1** A person can become accustomed to almost anything.
  - 2** Baseball still remains our national sport.
  - 3** The enormous prestige of the entertainer in our day is evidence of a decline in taste.
  - 4** Television is the death of the imagination.
  - 5** Television is the hope of the arts.
  - 6** Modern man grows increasingly dependent upon his machines.
  - 7** Familiarity breeds contempt.

### *Methods of paragraph organization*

With or without a topic sentence, there is always the problem of arranging the material of a paragraph. What are the typical or-

ganizational principles? We can answer by saying that they are, by and large, the same as those that govern the composition as a whole. In the chapter on Exposition, for example, we noticed such methods of organization as classification and division, comparison and contrast, illustration, and definition. These methods can determine the make-up of the smaller as well as the larger units of composition. For example, we have already used Thomas Henry Huxley's "The Herring" (page 66) as an instance of illustration, and this instance constitutes, as it happens, a single paragraph. We have offered Della Lutes's essay, "Are Neighbors Necessary?" (page 69) as another instance of illustration used as an organizing principle. In this essay individual paragraphs, notably the first, second, and sixth, are specifically organized to be illustrations.

We can say that in general the more complex methods of exposition and argument, such as functional analysis, chronological analysis, causal analysis, and deductive reasoning, rarely determine the structure of a single paragraph. Their very complexity prevents their doing so, for the structure of the paragraph is usually simple. It consists of the statement and elaboration of a point, or of a contrast made between two points, or of the illustration of an argument, or of the application of some principle.

Some paragraphs, however, do have a rather explicit logical structure in which the topic sentence states a conclusion which follows from premises stated in the body of the paragraph. Here is a paragraph so constructed:

A really great pitcher must have control. Charles Ramsey had wonderful speed and a curve that broke as sharply as any that I have ever seen. He dazzled opposing batters with his fireball or made them break their backs reaching for pitches that broke sharply away from the plate. Charles had nearly everything—he even fielded his position brilliantly—but he lacked control. Even on his best days his control was less than certain. Shrewd batters learned this, and waited him out, frequently successfully, for a base on balls. On his worst days he simply couldn't find the plate. A pitcher without control cannot win close games. For this reason I do not consider Ramsey a great pitcher.

This is a rather simple paragraph on a simple subject; yet it is characterized by a logical structure. We can see this plainly by stating its argument in the form of a conclusion deduced from premises (see pages 138-47):

A great pitcher must have control. (major premise)

Charles Ramsey lacks control. (minor premise)

Therefore Charles Ramsey is not a great pitcher. (conclusion)

Thus far we have examined paragraph structure primarily in the light of the methods of organization discussed in the chapters on exposition and argument. But the chapters on description and narration suggest other ways in which paragraphs may be organized; indeed, some of the simpler kinds of organizations, such as time sequence or the sequence of objects arranged in space. Ruskin's paragraph describing the English cathedral (page 180) provides a simple illustration: the paragraph is built around the objects beheld as the observer looks upward. Similarly, T. E. Lawrence (page 181) has organized his paragraph upon his movement through a mountain pass, chronologically observing and detailing the landscape.

Various other ways in which descriptions of a scene may be organized have been discussed in Chapter 7. They may be keyed to some sense, hearing or touch or sight; dominated by a special mood; focused upon a particular detail; and so on. All these methods of describing a scene apply to descriptive paragraphs as well as to the larger units of description. In fact, the examples that we used in Chapter 7 to illustrate methods of presenting description turn out to be, almost without exception, distinct paragraphs. The student can learn from them, therefore, a great deal about paragraph development (see especially pages 187-89).

By the very fact of discussing the typical ways in which paragraphs may be organized, we have assumed that a paragraph has unity, for a formless blob of writing would require no organization at all. Organization implies a unifying purpose; and unity implies coherence. (See the discussion of the relation of unity and coherence on page 20.) Note too that coherence imposes its own problems upon the inexperienced writer, for even when he has carved out a paragraph that relates to *one* idea and does *one* job within the composition, the parts of it may not actually hang together. It is possible for a paragraph to have an ascertainable unity and yet lack coherence.

Consider what happens to the coherence of the paragraph quoted from Chesterton on page 221 when we rearrange it to read as follows:

Artists of a large and wholesome vitality get rid of their art easily, as they breathe easily, or perspire easily. It is healthful to every sane man to utter the art within him; it is essential to every sane man to get rid of the art within him at all costs. The artistic temperament is a disease that afflicts amateurs. It is a disease which arises from men not having sufficient power of expression to utter and get rid of the element of art in their being. Thus, very great artists are able to be ordinary men — men like Shakespeare or Browning. But in artists of less

force, the thing becomes a pressure, and produces a definite pain, which is called the artistic temperament. There are many real tragedies of the artistic temperament, tragedies of vanity or violence or fear. But the great tragedy of the artistic temperament is that it cannot produce any art.

The paragraph as rearranged makes a kind of sense. It is "about" one general topic, the nature of the artistic temperament. But a careful comparison of the rearranged paragraph with the original will illustrate how much blurring of thought occurs when we do not think out the relation of sentence to sentence within the paragraph. (But it is only fair to observe that much of the finer articulation of part with part can come only with revision — when we reread our first draft and then subject it to a careful rewriting. See Chapter 14.)

We have briefly discussed unity and coherence within the paragraph, but even a brief discussion should not omit all mention of the third member of the triad — emphasis. In general, emphasis is a function of coherence; that is, only when we have made our thought truly coherent can we expect that it will express a proper scale of emphasis. (The rewriting of Chesterton's paragraph, for example, destroys the emphasis as well as the coherence of his thought.) We can further observe that two places in a paragraph, the beginning and the end, tend to be those of greatest emphasis. It is no accident that topic sentences — obvious devices for emphasis within the paragraph — tend to occur at the beginning or the end of the paragraph.

A review of these schemes for paragraph development serves to reinforce a point made earlier: There is no formula by which the length or structure of a paragraph may be determined. The student must use his best judgment, his common sense, and his taste. Unless he is very sure of his ground, he will tend to employ paragraphs of medium length and to use the more conventional paragraph structures. But in following these common-sense rules he must not conceive of paragraphs as mechanical units of even length and of homogeneous make-up. He should feel free, on occasion, to formulate paragraphs of "felt unity," relying upon his own impression of the "rightness" of the structure. For the student must never forget that the paragraph is a part — a meaningful part — of a larger structure and therefore cannot be formulated mechanically any more than can the larger structure of which it is a part.

### ■ Applications

- 1 Analyze Dickinson's use of paragraphs in "Red-bloods and Mollycoddles" (page 77). In terms of the author's theme, what



is the function of each paragraph? Does each paragraph have a topic sentence? If so, what is it?

- II What structural principles are to be found in each of the following paragraphs? If you judge that the paragraph has no real structure, say so and indicate why.

- 1 The paragraph from John Burrough's *Leaf and Tendril* quoted on page 175.
- 2 The two paragraphs from Millikan's "Science, Freedom and the World of Tomorrow" quoted on pages 97-98.
- 3 The paragraph from Hilaire Belloc's "The Mowing of a Field" quoted on page 168.

- III Reread the student theme "Why I Chose — College" (page 135) or "Careers for Girls" (page 154). Attempt to state the structural principle of each of the paragraphs in these themes.

## LINKING PARAGRAPH WITH PARAGRAPH

Since paragraphs are parts of a whole work, elements in an ordered sequence, it is important that they be properly linked together. Even when the chain of development embodied in the series of paragraphs has been thought out carefully, the reader will still be grateful for signposts to direct him. The judicious use of transitional words and phrases, such as *therefore*, *consequently*, *hence*, *thus*, *accordingly*, *on the contrary*, *however*, *nevertheless*, *furthermore*, *finally*, *in the same way*, and *moreover*, constitutes one way of helping the reader. (In this connection the student might reread pages 24-25.) The writer may also make use of the coordinate conjunctions *for*, *and*, *but*, *or*, and *nor* as signs of the connection between paragraphs. Since, however, we ordinarily use these conjunctions to join the parts of a sentence, or to join sentence with sentence, we employ them less frequently to tie a paragraph to a preceding paragraph.

If we do provide the reader with transitional words as signposts, obviously we must use them accurately. We must not begin a paragraph by writing "In the same way" unless what follows is "in the same way"; we must not write "Consequently" unless what follows is a consequence of the preceding paragraph.

An obvious device for linking paragraphs is the repetition of a key word or phrase. It is a useful device, especially if we wish to avoid the formality of style suggested by the employment of transitional words and the abruptness occasioned by the use of *and*, *but*,

or or The following paragraphs from *Time* magazine illustrate the use of this device

*A buzzard coasting high in the air over Central America last week would have seen nothing unusual. The mountainous, forest matted isthmus lay quietly in the greasy November sun. Among the many human realities invisible to the buzzard were the boundary lines—the imaginary but very actual barriers that said “This is Costa Rica; this is Guatemala, this is Nicaragua.”*

*Far below the coasting buzzard, in the gray green jungles of northern Nicaragua more was stirring than his great bird’s eye view could catch. Snaking through the scrub, guerrilla riflemen made short, sharp little raids against government outposts. In and out of the piny mountain country on Nicaragua’s northern flank armed, machete toting men filtered mysteriously. In Guatemala and Costa Rica dusty little companies, in faded denim and khaki, marked time in the tropic heat.*

*All this scattered activity added up to one gathering purpose. That purpose called itself the Caribbean Legion.*

Here is a series of three paragraphs from Dorothy Sayers’ *The Mind of the Maker*

*It is for this reason that I have prefixed to this brief study of the creative mind an introductory chapter in which I have tried to make clear the difference between fact and opinion, and between the so-called ‘laws’ based on fact and opinion respectively.*

*In the creeds of Christendom, we are confronted with a set of documents which purport to be not expressions of opinion but statements of fact. Some of these statements are historical, and with these the present book is not concerned. Others are theological—which means that they claim to be statements of fact about the nature of God and the universe, and with a limited number of these I propose to deal.*

*The selected statements are those which aim at defining the nature of God, conceived in His capacity as Creator. They were originally . . .*

Another obvious device for linking paragraphs is the use of the demonstrative pronouns *this (these)* and *that (those)*, but these words must be used with care. We are frequently tempted to employ them vaguely, hoping that the idea or object to which they refer will be clear from the context. Frequently it is not clear, and, instead of a tight and neat coupling of the two paragraphs, we have only the vague and clumsy suggestion of a tie. For example, consider the problem of making a transition between the following paragraphs:

*A table is put in a garden, and on the table a piece of blue cardboard is placed, on which there is a watch glass containing a drop of syrup. After a short while bees come to the syrup and suck up some of*

it. The bees then fly to their hive and give the syrup to other bees in the hive to make honey. Then they return to the feeding-place which they have discovered. We let the bees go on doing this for a while, after which we take away the blue cardboard with the syrup on it. Instead of this card we now put on the table a blue card on the left side of the first feeding-place, and a red card to the right of the first feeding-place. These new cards have no syrup on them but only an empty watch-glass lying on each. Thus, the blue card is on the left, the red card on the right, and there is nothing where the first blue feeding-card used to be. After we have arranged these new cards, we have not long to wait. Very soon bees arrive again, and it can be seen that they fly straight on to the blue card; none go to the red card.

This behavior of the bees seems to indicate two things. The first is that the bees remember that blue means syrup and so they fly to the blue. Since they did not go to the place on the table where the syrup used to be, but flew to the blue card which had been placed on the left, it really was the blue card that attracted them, not the place where the syrup had previously been. We have trained the bees to come to the blue card. And the second thing our experiment seems to mean is that bees can tell blue from red. — H. MUNRO FOX: "The Colors That Animals Can See," *The Personality of Animals*<sup>1</sup>

We might be tempted to begin the second paragraph with: "This seems to indicate two things. The first is . . ." But what the author wrote was: "This behavior of the bees seems to indicate two things. . . ." A little reflection will indicate that his judgment was sound. The author intends to state clearly a process of proof. He has been wise therefore to state very precisely what "this" refers to. The mistake of vague and indefinite reference is so common in student themes that the student should check each composition he writes to make certain that "this" or "that" standing at the beginning of a paragraph or at the beginning of a sentence refers unmistakably to some specific noun.

About the part-to-whole relationship (the paragraph as related to the whole composition), a further word may be said. As parts of a larger structure, paragraphs often have specialized functions. The opening paragraph (or paragraphs), for example, must introduce the whole essay; the final paragraph (or paragraphs) must bring it to a suitable conclusion. Within the essay itself, there may be many paragraphs of specialized function: one paragraph states a particular argument; another provides an illustration; still another effects a transition between two sections of the essay.

<sup>1</sup> "The Colors That Animals Can See," from *The Personality of Animals* by H. Munro Fox. Copyright 1940. Reprinted by permission of the author and Penguin Books, Ltd.

These part-to-whole relationships cannot be studied by considering the paragraph in isolation. Here, too, the student will learn most by studying whole essays. Study of the paragraph, therefore, always leads us back to the general problems of composition.

### ■ *Application*

Analyze the transitions between paragraphs in the student themes, "Why I Chose — College," page 135, and "A True Patriot," page 55.

## RHETORIC AND GRAMMAR OF THE SENTENCE

Having applied the principles of rhetorical organization to the composition as a whole and to its parts (the paragraphs), we next apply them to the smallest rhetorical unit, the *sentence*.

With this smallest rhetorical unit, however, we encounter another problem — the problem of grammar. In earlier chapters we could take the problem of grammar for granted; for, since the larger units of a composition are made up of sentences, we could assume that the demands of grammar had been met. But in this section, although we shall still be primarily concerned with how to make our sentences effective (the rhetorical problem), we shall have to touch upon specifically grammatical problems, which concern the rules and conventions that govern English sentence structure.

The basic distinction between grammar and rhetoric might be illustrated from the game of football. The "grammar" of the game would be the rules and conventions that determine the conduct of the game, including the system of scoring. The "rhetoric" of the game would be the knowledge of strategy and maneuver that leads to effective play and a winning game. To play the game correctly would not *necessarily* be to play it effectively, though effective play would certainly have to conform to the rules of the game. Let us consider the sentence, then, in both its rhetorical and grammatical aspects.

The sentence is usually defined as a complete thought, expressed through a subject and a predicate; that is, a sentence "says something" — makes a predication — about another "thing," the subject. The foregoing is a grammatical definition, but it will not be too difficult to relate it to the three basic principles of rhetorical structure — unity, coherence, and emphasis. A sentence obviously has *unity* (is a complete thought), and its parts *cohere* (that is, are related to one another in special ways so as to produce that unity).

The relationship of *emphasis* to the pattern of sentence structure may not be so obvious. But the term *emphasis* is applicable, for every complete sentence must have a special focus, a specific center of emphasis, around which the parts cohere.

This center of emphasis is the finite verb. Verbals, that is, nouns and adjectives derived from the verb, will not serve, even though, as derivatives of the verb, they express an action, condition, or state of being and even though they retain enough of the power of the verb to take a direct object. It is not enough that we connect the thing about which we are talking (the subject) with some action. The following phrases make such connections:

the volcano belching clouds of sulphurous smoke  
lastly to stop their ears against the heart-moving pleas of  
their suffering fellows  
by crossing the border that separates manly pride from mean vanity

But none of these strings of words is a sentence; the action is not pinned down to a specific subject, singular or plural, first, second, or third person, acting at a given time

The volcano belched smoke.  
Stop!  
He crossed the border.

These are sentences, for each of the three contains a finite verb.<sup>2</sup> In English, as well as in most other languages, the finite verb is the signal of predication. A phrase like "the volcano belching clouds of sulphurous smoke" remains unfocused. It lacks a point of emphasis around which the other parts of the sentence may be made to cohere so as to give us that special kind of unity which characterizes the kind of complete thought that is a sentence.

### *The normal word order of the English sentence*

In discarding many of the inflections that characterized the language at an earlier period, English has come to depend very heavily

<sup>2</sup> The student is to be reminded that a finite verb literally means a *limited* verb, that is, limited with reference to person, number, tense, and so on. Thus *goes* may be used only with a singular noun in the third person and with reference to present or future time; whereas the "infinite" forms, such as the participle *going* and the infinitive *to go*, refer to the general idea of going. Two things tend to obscure this distinction. (1) the fact that forms such as the participle and the infinitive do have some limitations, such as tense distinctions; and (2) the fact that in modern English so many of the inflections of the verb — inflections that show tense, number, and so on — have been lost, so that most of the finite forms are exactly alike. But the general distinction holds, nevertheless. As contrasted with the infinite forms of the verb, the finite forms are limited and specific and, because specific, can be used to provide a focus for the sentence.

for expressing its meaning upon the position that words occupy in the sentence pattern. In some instances, change of position means a radical change in meaning. Thus, "The boy hit the ball" means something very different from "The ball hit the boy." Most of the shifts of meaning accomplished by rearrangement of words and word groups within a sentence are far less drastic than that in the example just cited. Yet, even the slight alterations and shadings to be gained by manipulations of word order are important if we value the clarity and force of our writing.

Let us look first at the "normal" word order of the English sentence.

A sentence may consist of only one word:

Go!

Here we have a finite verb with a subject, i.e., *you* (as is usual with commands the subject is not expressed but is understood). The meaning is complete and definite: you are to go — you are commanded to do so.

But the *normal* pattern of the English sentence gives us a subject (noun, pronoun, or noun substitute) followed by a finite verb, the verb agreeing with its subject in person and number:

Birds fly. A bird flies. Here I am.

If the verb requires a complement (predicate adjective, predicate noun, or direct object), the complement normally follows the verb.

He is *unhappy*. (predicate adjective)

This is the *conqueror*. (predicate nominative)

The guardsman struck the *boy*. (direct object)

If there is an indirect object, it comes *between* the verb and the direct object.

The officer gave *him* a pen.

Note that the position of the indirect object is a *fixed* position. We cannot write, "The officer gave a pen *him*." If we make use of a prepositional phrase "to him" to express the receiver of the action, we can, to be sure, place it after the complement, but then we are no longer dealing with an indirect object. (The prepositional phrase can be moved even to the beginning of the sentence: "To him the officer gave a pen.")

This, then, is the normal or natural word order of the English sentence:

Subject + verb + inner complement (if any) + outer complement (if any)

(In the interest of simplicity we have for the moment left out modifiers,<sup>3</sup> except the articles *a* and *the*, the better to see the basic structure.)

### *Shifts in word order*

Even though variety in sentence structure is desirable, the student should not strive to avoid normal order. It accords with the genius of the English language. It need not be monotonous, for changes in the modifiers and the ordering of the modifiers, not to mention changes in the length of the sentences themselves, will afford plenty of variety. Frequently the most direct way out of disorder and verbosity is to be found in returning to the word order normal to English. The truth of the matter is that any shift from normal word order ought to be questioned and, if it is to be retained, made to justify itself. A shift from the normal always calls attention to itself. The shift is thus justified only when such emphasis is justified. Consider the following instances:

How kind you have been! [The word order used here emphasizes the notion of *kindness* by altering normal order and putting the adjective before the subject and verb — an important place in the sentence.]

A bigger fool I have never seen. [*Fool* is the direct object, and the shift of position, a direct reversal of the normal pattern, is very emphatic.]

In addition to the simple method of putting the complement before the subject and verb, illustrated above, we have another important device for stressing what would be in the natural word order the direct object of the verb. Thus, instead of

The guardsman struck the boy.

we may write

The boy was struck by the guardsman.

And if we do not know who did the striking or if, for the moment at least, we are not interested in the agent, we may write

The boy was struck.

What we have done in essence is to reduce the verb to a predicate adjective which is linked to what in normal order would be the direct object (now, the subject) by some form of the verb *to be*.

<sup>3</sup> For further discussion of modifiers, see pages 233-38.

What the student should note, in the first place, is that this construction, the "passive" construction, has the effect of altering the normal word order in English; and, in the second place, that though on occasion it is effective, it is not to be overused or to be used without a good reason. If one drifts into this kind of construction lazily and unthinkingly, he will exhibit the kind of woolly and flaccid writing that causes writers of grammar handbooks to warn against the "weak passive." For example, consider these "weak passives":

The problem of how to give people a proper sense of the perils of the atomic bomb without at the same time immobilizing them with terror *was discussed*.

The matter *has been taken* under advisement and at the proper time *will be acted upon*.

The whole panorama — exciting, splendid, and yet awe-inspiring — *was seen* by me.

### *Position of the modifiers*

We now need to consider the position in the sentence occupied by the various modifiers — by the adjectives and adverbs, and by the phrases and clauses which function either as adjectives or adverbs. The position of some of these modifiers is rather rigidly fixed; that of others is optional, and since there is no prescribed position for them, the ordering of these "movable" modifiers is a matter of taste, emphasis, and expressiveness. We can say that the fixed modifiers are placed largely in accordance with grammatical rules; the position of the movable modifiers is assigned largely in terms of rhetorical considerations.

### *Fixed modifiers*

Let us consider first the fixed modifiers. These include most adjectives, and phrases and clauses which have the function of adjectives. Relative clauses, adjectival phrases, and adjectival infinitives follow the substantive<sup>4</sup> which they modify. We must write, for example:

The man *to see* is Jim.

The man *I knew* was Jim.

The man *whom I mentioned* was Jim.

The house *in the country* was for sale.

<sup>4</sup> A substantive is any word, phrase, or clause used as a noun.



We cannot write:

The *to see* man is Jim.

or:

The *I knew* man was Jim.

Single adjectives, on the contrary, just reverse this rule. The normal position of a single adjective is *before* the substantive that it modifies. For example, we would normally write:

A *bright* day dawned

A *long black* automobile rounded the corner.

He gave an *extended, involved, and tortuous* argument.

Predicate adjectives, of course, do not come under this rule. We say that they modify the substantive "through the verb," and they normally come after the verb. Consider these illustrations.

The rose was *red*

The third night seemed *long*.

The house was *for sale*.

On occasion, however, we do reverse the normal positions. Examples will readily occur to the student. Here are a few:

Comrades *all*!

Chapter *ten*.

John the *Baptist*.

A car, *long and black*, rounded the corner.

A small face, *dnty*, appeared at the window.

*Black* is my true love's hair.

As we have seen earlier, variation from the norm is emphatic, and in all these illustrations the reversal of normal position has the effect of emphasizing the adjectives used.<sup>5</sup>

We observed earlier that thoughtless use of emphatic position or overuse of emphatic position defeats its own ends. The principle

<sup>5</sup> One qualification of this principle, however, must be made. Some of the examples seem to represent, not an emphatic variation, but the normal pattern e.g., *chapter ten* and *John the Baptist*. But in expressions of this sort, as a little reflection will show, the adjective is important and normally requires stress. Furthermore, there are other expressions in which we normally encounter the adjective following the noun: first certain fossilized expressions derived from French law, such as "body politic" and "heir apparent" and second, expressions such as "the day following," "the funds available" which actually represent elliptical expressions which we would have to fill out as follows: "the day following (this day)" "the funds available (to us)". These classes of exceptions, however, do not affect the general rule, that an adjective normally *precedes* its substantive, and that the reversal of this position throws emphasis upon the adjective.

applies to modifiers. John Bunyan, in his *Pilgrim's Progress*, used the phrase "the house beautiful." In the context provided by Bunyan the expression is well used. But, with it as model, the advertisers nowadays produce such absurdities as "the memorial park beautiful," "the body beautiful," and "the hair-do glamorous." Variation from the normal position of the adjective, like other emphatic devices, ought to be used sparingly and cautiously.

To sum up, the position of adjectives and adjectival phrases and clauses allows very little variation. The position of most adjectival modifiers is definitely fixed. The student's real problem here is to avoid clumsiness and absurdity through a careless placing of such modifiers.

In this connection, relative clauses (which we must remember are adjectival modifiers) call for a further word. Relative clauses may be *unlinked* as in the sentence "The man I knew was Jim" or *linked* as in "The man whom I knew was Jim." The *link* words are the pronouns *who* (*whom*), restricted to human beings; *which*, restricted to animals and inanimate objects; and *that*, unrestricted. A relative clause which *immediately* follows the substantive modified requires no link word; otherwise it does, and the choice of the proper link word may be necessary for clarity. Compare:

1. The man in the automobile that I recognized was Jim.

with:

2. The man in the automobile whom I recognized was Jim.

Note that sentence 1 is ambiguous as sentence 2 is not.

Relative clauses occasion difficulty in still other ways. We may make a clumsy reduplication of clauses:

The man who had just come in whom I had never met was a Mr. Rogers.

Better to write:

The new arrival, whom I had never met, was a Mr. Rogers.

or:

A Mr. Rogers, whom I had never met, had just come in.

Sometimes we carelessly make a relative clause modify a general idea which is implied but not expressed. Thus:

She had been hurt and bitterly disappointed, which accounted for her strange conduct.

Better to write:

Her hurt and bitter disappointment accounted for her strange conduct.

or:

She had been hurt and bitterly disappointed, a fact which accounted for her strange conduct.

### *Movable modifiers*

The position of adverbial modifiers is far less rigidly fixed than that of adjectival modifiers. For example, consider the variety of positions occupied by adverbial modifiers in the sentences that follow:

*There, at ten o'clock, I arrived as I had been told to do.*

*At ten o'clock, I arrived there, as I had been told to do.*

*There, as I had been told to do, I arrived at ten o'clock.*

The first sentence tends to stress the place as the most important matter: the second sentence stresses the time of arrival. The third sentence also emphasizes the place and suggests that the instructions had been principally concerned with designating it. Control of the shadings of meaning is the mark of a skillful writer. Thus the fact that adverbial modifiers can be shifted about does not mean that we are at liberty to place them at random but, on the contrary, that if we are to write well, we must exercise great care in placing them.

*Caution:* Unless adverbs such as *merely*, *just*, *only*, *almost* are placed immediately before the words that they modify, the meaning may become ambiguous.

You *only* live once.

You *just* have one bullet left.

I *merely* asked for what was left.

Most of us fall into such sentences in daily speaking, and the inflections with which we say them can usually be counted upon to make the meaning clear. But, in writing, where inflection cannot help, we should be more precise; we should make unmistakably clear that *only* modifies *once* and that *just* modifies *one*. Therefore the proper sequences are "only once" and "just one." Does *merely* indicate that I requested rather than demanded, or is the writer trying to say that he asked for nothing in excess of what was left? With this last instance, we are led to the problem of "squinting constructions."

In such constructions the modifier looks two ways, and it is not clear which of the two possibilities is intended. For example:

The winner of the match tomorrow plays in the final round.  
Does the sentence mean that

The winner of the match plays in the final round tomorrow.  
or does it mean

The winner of the match to be played tomorrow goes into the final round.

In the following sentence, *often* is ambiguous:

The pitcher that goes to the well often gets broken.

### *Dangling phrases*

There is, however, one kind of adjectival modifier that is freely movable, the participial or verbal adjective. Thus, one may write:

*Smoking a cigarette*, James sauntered down the street.

James, *smoking a cigarette*, sauntered down the street.

James sauntered down the street, *smoking a cigarette*.

All three sentences are perfectly good English. There is no one correct position for the participial phrase, and where we place it is dictated largely by considerations of taste.

The fact that the participle, though an adjectival modifier, has this character of movability makes it all too easy for the student to confuse it with the other movable modifiers, the adverbial modifiers. The confusion results in the so-called dangling participle. (The participle, having no substantive to modify, is said to dangle.) For example:

Walking down the street, a barber shop came into view.

What is meant is obviously

Walking down the street, I saw a barber shop. [participle modifies *I*]

or:

As I walked down the street, a barber shop came into view. [adverbial clause substituted for the participle]

Consider some further instances of the dangling participle:

*Throwing to either side a band of hissing foam*, we felt the boat shudder under us as we turned on full power.

*Based upon statistics*, he should not die for some years.

Other verbals than the participle may be left dangling by the careless writer. In this example a gerund phrase dangles:

*On peering into the darkness*, the shape disappeared.

Evidently the writer meant to say

On peering into the darkness, he found that the shape had disappeared.  
Here an infinitive phrase dangles:

*To hold it properly*, the handle must be grasped.

The writer evidently meant to say

To hold it properly, one must grasp the handle.

Obviously, in order to avoid falling into absurdities we need to consider with some care the relationship between the modifier and the rest of the sentence; and, as the above examples indicate, verbals call for special care.

### *Absolute constructions*

An absolute construction is a phrase, usually consisting of a noun or pronoun modified by a participle and having only a very general relation to the rest of the sentence.

*The mission having been carried out*, the force received orders to return.  
*The principal danger once passed*, they threw off their fears.

Some authorities also classify as absolute constructions such phrases as the following:

*To judge from his face*, he can't be very old.  
*Remembering the unpredictability of the weather and of human nature*,  
everything else portends a fine game on Saturday.  
*Taking all the evidence into account*, the decision was a just one.

It may not be altogether easy to see just how these expressions escape being dangling modifiers. An argument sometimes urged, that they escape dangling because they designate a *general* truth, is not altogether convincing. Perhaps we shall do best simply to say that such expressions are idiomatic; i.e., that English simply does permit us, not altogether logically, to say

*To judge from his face*, he can't be very old.

and does not require us to expand this to

*To judge from his face*, I can't believe that he is very old.

### ■ *Applications*

- 1 Convert the following sentences to normal word order; that is, re-establish the pattern of *subject, verb, inner and outer complements*.

- 1 Icebergs, he could see wherever he looked.
  - 2 There was a man once that was bored with his life.
  - 3 The arrival of five cruisers and twenty destroyers was reported.
  - 4 The great bear was surrounded by a horde of yapping, excited dogs.
  - 5 It was a great bear that was surrounded by the horde of yapping, excited dogs.
  - 6 Ways and means for handling the peak late-afternoon traffic through Westville and Lakeville were discussed.
- II In the following sentences, some of the adjectival modifiers are improperly placed. Rearrange the modifiers, and, where necessary, rewrite the sentences to improve clarity and effectiveness.
- 1 Bird cage and parrot offered by refined young lady, having green feathers and yellow beak for what have you? — *The Salt Lake Tribune*
  - 2 A two-story house was for sale with green shutters.
  - 3 A man in the army that I served with gave me this book.
  - 4 It was the man I knew whom I now saw.
  - 5 The lady whom I knew from Boston has not returned.
  - 6 Boy is missing in first pair of long pants. — *The Detroit Free Press*
  - 7 Rex Parsons laid an egg on our table that had been previously laid on the nest by a little white Leghorn hen that was three inches in length and  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches in circumference the smallest way. — *The Farmington Franklin Journal*
  - 8 Slowly filling with water, we saw the ship go down.
- III The following sentences contain dangling participles. Remove them (a) by rewriting the sentence so that the participle is given some word to modify and (b) by rewriting the dangling participle into a subordinate clause. For example:
- “Ringing the doorbell, the house answered us with silence.”  
 Correct to (a) “Ringing the doorbell, we could hear from the house only the answer of silence.” Or (b) “Although we rang the doorbell, the house answered us with silence.”
- 1 Hurrying and out of breath, scurrying up the depot stairs, the 9:01 for Grand Central swept past us.
  - 2 The afternoon drowsed on to an end, sipping lemonade and listening to records.

- 3 Reading the thrilling ghost story, the grandfather clock ticked insistently in our ears
  - 4 Hanging on for dear life, the car careened to the edge of the road
  - 5 Walking up the last steps of the drive, the first mutterings of thunder were heard
- IV Some of the following sentences include dangling modifiers. In others, the modifiers have been shifted out of the order in which they were originally written. Remove dangling modifiers, and rearrange the italicized modifiers so as to improve the clarity and effectiveness of each sentence.
- 1 Though the Greek scientist Eratosthenes had, *with only a small error*, calculated the distance of the sun from the earth and the earth's circumference at the equator, his theory of a global world was received by men of common sense *with polite scorn*
  - 2 Singing merrily and happily, our music put the whole company in a jolly mood
  - 3 In myriad private hotel rooms of myriad hotels the Alumni Weekly Lunch is, *today*, being celebrated, *as every day*
  - 4 *Because their maxims would not have expressed their hearts*, they would not have been perfect moralists *then, even if their theory had been correct* (which, I think it was, *though not in statement, in intention*)
  - 5 Thinking as hard as we could, the answer still could not be found
  - 6 Eight men were drowned, *however*, and *from that memory* my grandfather *at intervals all his life* suffered and never read anything but the shipwreck of St. Paul *if asked to read the family prayers*
  - 7 There can be no miracles *unless there exists something else which we may call the supernatural, in addition to Nature*

## General principles of sentence structure

### Parallelism

Thus far we have considered the structure of the sentence from one point of view—that of the arrangement of its basic constituents and of the various kinds of modifiers. But other principles may determine the structure of a sentence. One of these is *parallelism*, a method of adjusting grammatical pattern to rhetorical pattern. In

its simplest terms, parallelism means no more than that elements of like meaning should be put in like constructions.

The very richness of English tempts us to violate parallelism. For example, we have two noun forms of the verb. We can use the infinitive *to swim* or the gerund *swimming*. Consequently, the careless writer may blunder into a sentence like this: "*To swim* and *hunting* are my favorite sports." But the distinction between infinitive and gerund awkwardly distracts the reader from what is a coordinate relation. We ought to write: "*Swimming* and *hunting* are my favorite sports." Or: "*To swim* and *to hunt* are my favorite sports."

It is our great variety of movable modifiers, however, that most tempts us into violations of parallelism. We may write, for example: "*Being lazy by nature* and *because I am clumsy*, I have never liked tennis." Such violations of parallelism easily creep into first drafts — even into the first drafts of a good writer. Careful rewriting is the remedy.

In learning to avoid these blunders, we must not forget, however, that the principle of parallelism is a positive one. It is, in fact, a powerful rhetorical device. By using parallel constructions, we emphasize parallel ideas, and we can thus play off one sort of meaning against the other. Sentences constructed on this principle are sometimes called "balanced sentences." Here are two examples:

1. As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God.
2. He was sick of life, but he was afraid of death; and he shuddered at every sight or sound which reminded him of the inevitable hour.

The parallel elements may be represented in the following scheme:

1. as	so
hart	soul
panteth	panteth (repetition)
water brooks	Thee
2. sick	afraid
life	death

### *Coordination and subordination*

Coordination may be regarded as an aspect of parallelism. We have seen that elements of like meaning should be put in like constructions. Conversely, we must not link as equals elements that are not of equal importance. A less-important element must be made



subordinate to a more important one. Consider the following sentence: "I stayed at home; I was ill." What is the relation between the two statements? The writer has merely associated them. He has not defined the relation of one to the other. He might define the relationship in various ways:

Because I was ill, I stayed at home.  
While I was staying at home, I was ill.  
Although I stayed at home, I was ill.  
Feeling ill, I stayed at home.  
I stayed at home, quite ill.

Simple, uncritical writing, such as that of a child, tends to present a succession of coordinate units: "Then the bear got hungry. He came out of his den. He remembered the honey tree. And he started walking toward the honey tree." The mature and discriminating writer indicates the relation of his statements, one to another, by subordinating, thus:

Having done this, she thought it prudent to drop a few words before the bishop, letting him know that she had acquainted the Puddingdale family with their good fortune so that he might perceive that he stood committed to the appointment.

The writer who points up relationships, instead of leaving them to be inferred by the reader, obviously makes the reader's task easier. He gives not only facts but an interpretation of facts: the very pattern of subordination is an interpretation. When, however, the writer, by using subordination, assumes this burden of interpretation, he must not falsify his interpretation by careless and thoughtless subordination. He must think through the relation of part to part. Unless he does so, he may write sentences like this: "My head was feeling heavy when I took an aspirin." In this sentence the motive for the act is treated as though it were the matter of importance; the act itself has been relegated to the subordinate position. Rather than confuse the reader with a subordination which inverts the real relationship, the writer would have done better simply to have written: "My head was feeling heavy; I took an aspirin." But it is obvious, of course, that the proper subordination would be: "Because my head was feeling heavy, I took an aspirin." Or: "When my head began to feel heavy, I took an aspirin."

Here are two further examples of improper subordination:

The workman snored loudly and he had a red face.

Alter to:

The workman, who had a red face, snored loudly.

or to:

The red-faced workman snored loudly.

Mr. Jones is our neighbor and he drove by in a large automobile.

Alter to:

Mr. Jones, who is our neighbor, drove by in a large automobile.

or to:

Mr. Jones, our neighbor, drove by in a large automobile.

Though subordination is important as a means for tightening up a naïve and oversimple style, the student ought not to be browbeaten into constant subordination. In certain contexts a good writer might prefer:

The workman snored loudly. He had a red face.

This form of the statement does bring into sharp focus the detail of the red face. It might even suggest a leisurely observer, looking on with some amusement. For instances of some other effects secured by a simple and uncomplicated style, the student might refer to pages 182-83.

We may sum up this topic as follows: Grammatical subordination must conform to the rhetorical sense. Positively, it is an important means for securing economy. Careful subordination tends to give the sense of a thoughtful observer who has sifted his ideas and arranged them with precision.

### *Loose sentences and periodic sentences*

We can view sentence structure in still another way. We can distinguish between those sentences in which the sense of the sentence is held up until almost the end (*periodic sentences*) and those in which it is not held up (*loose sentences*). Holding up the sense creates suspense: we do not know how the sentence is "coming out" until we have reached, or nearly reached, the end of it. Here is an example:

It was partly at such junctures as these and partly at quite different ones that with the turn my matters had now taken, my predicament, as I have called it, grew most sensible.

— HENRY JAMES

If we convert the sentence to loose structure, we get something like this:

With the turn my matters had now taken, my predicament, as I have called it, grew most sensible, partly at such junctures as these and partly at quite different ones.

The loose sentence is the "normal" sentence in English; the structure of the periodic sentence is "abnormal." As we noted above, deviation from the norm always tends to be emphatic. The periodic sentence, in skillful hands, is powerfully emphatic. By inversion, by use of the "It was" construction, or by interposition of movable modifiers between subject and predicate, the sentence and its primary statement are made to end together. But like all deviations from the norm, the periodic sentence — and the balanced sentence — are somewhat artificial. Overused, such sentences soon weary the reader.

### *Sentence length and sentence variation*

How long should a sentence be? It may be as short as one word. "Go!" is a perfectly good sentence; it has a predicate with subject implied. On the other hand, a sentence may be forty or fifty words long. In fact, by tacking together elements with *and*'s and *but*'s, we can construct sentences of indefinite length. These are the possible extremes. But with the sentence, as with the paragraph, common sense and taste set reasonable limits. A succession of very short sentences tends to be monotonous. Extremely long sentences tend to bog down the reader in a quagmire of words.

This is not, of course, to say that the writer should not feel free to use a one-word sentence whenever he needs it (see the James Joyce excerpt on page 211) or even a succession of short sentences to gain special effects. By the same token, he ought to feel free to use very long sentences to gain special effects. The following sentence from Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria* will illustrate:

Perhaps her fading mind called up once more the shadows of the past to float before it, and retraced, for the last time, the vanished visions of that long history — passing back and back, through the cloud of years, to older and ever older memories — to the spring woods at Osborne, so full of primroses for Lord Beaconsfield — to Lord Palmerston's queer clothes and high demeanour, and Albert's face under the green lamp, and Albert's first stag at Balmoral, and Albert in his blue and silver uniform, and the Baron coming in through a doorway, and Lord M. dreaming at Windsor with the rooks cawing in the elm-trees, and the Archbishop of Canterbury on his knees in the dawn, and the old King's turkey-cock ejaculations, and Uncle Leopold's soft voice at Claremont, and Lehen with the globes, and her mother's feathers

sweeping down towards her, and a great old repeater-watch of her father's in its tortoise-shell case, and a yellow rug, and some friendly flounces of sprigged muslin, and the trees and the grass at Kensington.

— LYTTON STRACHEY: *Queen Victoria*

Strachey is imagining what may have passed through the old Queen's dying mind as she slipped from consciousness. He imagines the succession of memories as going backward in time, from those of adult life to those of youth, and on back to the memories of childhood. The loosely linked series of phrases which constitute the sentence can be justified on two counts: the memories are presented as those of a dying mind, and, as the memories go backward in time, they become those of a child. Thus dramatically considered, the jumping from scene to scene (as suggested by the dashes) and the loose tacking on of additional scenes (by *and*'s) are justified. This sentence, which closes Strachey's book with what amounts to a recapitulation of Victoria's life, is thus used to gain a special effect.

The normal limitations and requirements of the human mind dictate how much can be taken in satisfactorily "at one bite." Unless the writer is striving for some special effect, he ought to regard with suspicion very short and, especially, very long sentences. The human mind also requires variety: the sentences should not all be monotonously of the same length.

Alternation of long and short sentences is but one means, however, by which to secure variety. Another, and a most important, means consists in varying the structure of the sentence. Sentences that repeat a pattern become monotonous. Here is an example:

I was twenty that April and I made the glen my book. I idled over it. I watched the rhododendron snow its petals on the dark pools that spun them round in a swirl of brown foam and beached them on a tiny coast glittering with mica and fool's gold. I got it by heart, however, the dripping rocks, the ferny grottos, the eternal freshness, the sense of loam, of deep sweet decay, of a chain of life continuous and rich with the ages. I gathered there the walking fern that walks across its little forest world by striking root with its long tips, tip to root and root to tip walking away from the localities that knew it once. I was aware that the walking fern has its oriental counterpart. I knew also that *Shortia*, the flower that was lost for a century after Michaux found it "*dans les hautes montagnes de Caroline*," has its next of kin upon the mountains of Japan. I sometimes met mountain people hunting for ginseng for the Chinese market; long ago the Chinese all but exterminated that herbalistic panacea of theirs, and now they turn for it to the only other source, the Appalachians.

The "I was — I idled — I gathered" formula is relieved somewhat by the long descriptive phrases and relative clauses. Even so, it is irritatingly monotonous. Here is the way in which Donald Culross Peattie actually wrote the passage:

The glen was my book, that April I was twenty. I idled over it, watching the rhododendron snow its petals on the dark pools that spun them round in a swirl of brown foam and beached them on a tiny coast glittering with mica and fool's gold. But I got it by heart, the dripping rocks, the ferny grottos, the eternal freshness, the sense of loam, of deep sweet decay, of a chain of life continuous and rich with the ages. The walking fern I gathered there, that walks across its little forest world by striking root with its long tips, tip to root and root to tip walking away from the localities that knew it once, has its oriental counterpart; of that I was aware. And I knew that *Shortia*, the flower that was lost for a century after Michaux found it, "*dans les hautes montagnes de Caroline*," has its next of kin upon the mountains of Japan. Sometimes I met mountain people hunting for ginseng for the Chinese market; long ago the Chinese all but exterminated that herbalistic panacea of theirs, and now they turn for it to the only other source, the Appalachians.

— DONALD CULROSS PEATTIE: *Flowering Earth*

There are many ways in which to vary sentence structure. Nearly everything said earlier in this chapter can be brought to bear on this problem. We can invert the normal pattern, or rearrange the pattern to throw emphasis on what is normally the subject or complement; we can subordinate severely or rather lightly. Most of all, we can dispose the modifiers, particularly the movable modifiers, so as to vary the pattern almost indefinitely. The effort to secure variety should never be an overriding consideration. A sentence should take the structure best adapted to its special job. The writer will usually find that he is thoroughly occupied in discharging this obligation. Yet it is well to remind ourselves here again of the claims of the whole composition. We never write a "collection of sentences"; we write an essay, a theme, a total composition. The good sentence honors the claims exerted upon it by the total composition. And in our writing, and especially in our *rewriting*, we need to see that we have avoided monotony of sentence length or of sentence structure.

## ■ Applications

- 1 Try to determine which of the following sentences are periodic in structure and which are loose. Rewrite the periodic sen-

tences into loose sentences, and the loose into periodic. Pick out the balanced sentences, if any

- 1 The power, and the restriction on it, though quite distinguishable when they do not approach each other, may yet, like the intervening colors between white and black, approach so nearly as to perplex the understanding, as colors perplex the vision in marking the distinction between them — JOHN MARSHALL
  - 2 Peace cannot be secured without armies, and armies must be supported at the expense of the people. It is for your sake, not for our own, that we guard the barrier of the Rhine against the ferocious Germans, who have so often attempted, and who will always desire to exchange the solitude of their woods and morasses for the wealth and fertility of Gaul — EDWARD GIBBON
  - 3 The night, the earth under her, seemed to swell and recede together with a limitless, unhurried, benign breathing — KATHERINE ANNE PORTER
  - 4 And it is precisely because of this utterly unsettled and uncertain condition of philosophy at present that I regard any practical application of it to religion and conduct as exceedingly dangerous — CHARLES S. PEIRCE
  - 5 If we begin with certainties, we shall end in doubts, but if we begin with doubts, and are patient in them, we shall end in certainties — FRANCIS BACON
  - 6 The mania for handling all the sides of every question, looking into every window, and opening every door, was, as Bluebeard judiciously pointed out to his wives, fatal to their practical usefulness in society — HENRY ADAMS
  - 7 Bubbling spontaneously from the artless heart of a child or man, without egotism and full of feeling, laughter is the music of life — WILLIAM OSLER
  - 8 Every night I pulled my fling down and folded it up and laid it on a shelf in my bedroom and one morning before breakfast I found it, though I had folded it up the night before, knotted around the bottom of the flingstaff so that it was touching the grass — W. B. YEATS
  - 9 The hunger and thirst for knowledge, the keen delight in the chase, the good humored willingness to admit that the scent was false, the eager desire to get on with the work, the cheerful resolution to go back and begin again, the broad good sense, the unaffected modesty, the imperturbable temper, the gratitude for any little help that was given — all these will remain in my memory, though I cannot paint them for others — R. W. MAITLAND
- 11 Look back to the paragraphs quoted from *Time* magazine on page 227. *Time* style is celebrated for its inversions of, and its drastic departures from, normal sentence order. The mo-

tive, presumably, is a desire for condensation and emphasis. Rewrite these paragraphs so as to restore normal sentence order. Can you justify the departures from normal order? Is emphasis intelligently used? Or does too much emphasis result in no emphasis?

- II: The following paragraph is from Ring Lardner's *You Know Me, Al*, which purports to be a series of letters from Jack, the rookie pitcher, to his friend. As a revelation of character and of speech "in character," it is quite perfect. But rewriting it may provide us with a useful exercise in sentence structure and proper subordination. Put it into formal English.

We was to play 2 games here and was to play 1 of them in Tacoma and the other here but it rained and so we did not play neither 1 and the people was pretty mad a bout it because I was announced to pitch and they figured probibly this would be there only chance to see me in axion and they made a awful holler but Comiskey says No they would not be no game because the field neither here or in Tacoma was in no shape for a game and he would not take no chance of me pitching and may be slipping in the mud and straneing myself and then where would the White Sox be at next season. So we been laying a round all the p.m. and I and Dutch Schaefer had a long talk to gether while some of the rest of the boys was out buying some cloths to take on the trip and Al I bought a full dress suit of evening cloths at Portland yesterday and now I owe Callahan the money for them and am not going on no trip so probibly I wont never get to ware them and it is just \$45.00 throwed a way but I would ratier throw \$45.00 a way then go on a trip a round the world and leave my family all winter.

## Chapter Ten

### Diction

Good diction is the choice of the right words. Accurate, effective expression obviously requires the right words, the words which will represent — not nearly, not approximately, but exactly — what we want to say. This is a simple rule; but to apply it is far from simple. The good writer must choose the right words, yes; but how does he know which are the right words?

Diction would be no problem if there existed for each object and each idea just one word which denoted specifically that object or idea — if there were one name and one name only for each separate thing. But language is not like that. Most words are not strictly denotative, that is, they do not merely point to a specific object. Some words in English, it is true, particularly scientific words, do represent the only name we have for a specific object or substance. *Lemming*, for example, is the only name we have for a certain mouse-like rodent; *purine* is the only name of a compound the chemical formula of which is  $C_5H_4N_4$ . The language of science ideally is a language of pure denotation. But scientific language constitutes a special case, and its problems are different from those of more ordinary language.

#### PRIMARY MEANING AND IMPLIED MEANING

Actually, instead of one word and only one word for each thing, the writer finds competing for his attention a number of words, all of which denote exactly or approximately the same thing. Moreover, even those words which have exactly the same denotation, that is, those which explicitly refer to the same thing, may have different connotations — different shades of meaning.



For example, *brightness*, *radiance*, *effulgence*, and *brilliance* may be said to have the same general denotation, but there is a considerable difference in what they connote. *Radiance* implies beams radiating from a source, as the words *brilliance* or *brightness* do not. *Brilliance*, on the other hand, suggests an intensity of light which *effulgence* and *brightness* do not. Again, *brightness* is a more homely, everyday word than are *radiance*, *brilliance*, and *effulgence*. These are only a few suggested contrasts among the connotations of these words, all of which describe a quality of light.

Varying connotations in words with the same denotation may also be illustrated from words which refer to concrete objects. Compare the simple words *bucket* and *pail*. The primary meanings are much the same. We might apply either word to naming the same vessel. But in most of present-day America *bucket* is more likely to be the ordinary word, with associations of everyday activity; whereas *pail* will seem a little more old-fashioned and endowed with more "poetic" suggestions. It connotes for some readers a bygone era of pretty milkmaids in an idyllic setting. But *bucket*, too, may have sentimental associations, someone will exclaim, remembering the song entitled, "The Old Oaken Bucket." For words change in meaning from period to period, and their associated meanings change, as a rule, much more rapidly than do their primary meanings.

The process of growth and decay in language is so strong that many words in the course of generations have shifted not only their associations but their primary meanings as well; some have even reversed their original meanings.

The history of word change is interesting in itself, but we are concerned here with the light that it throws upon the nature of words. Words shift meaning because they are not static but are dynamic. The secondary and associated meanings of a word are powerful, and it is not surprising that sometimes one of them becomes the new primary meaning. It behooves the writer to take into account these important associated meanings of a word as well as its precise denotation. Indeed, the writer has the task of controlling both dimensions of his language. Thus in a romantic tale one might appropriately use the word *steed* rather than *horse*. But in ordinary contexts one certainly would not say or write, "Saddle my steed," unless he were being deliberately playful or ironic. On the other hand, there are still other contexts in which, instead of the rather neutral word *horse*, it might be appropriate to use words like *plug* or *nag*, terms which are as derisive or humorous in tone as *steed* is poetic and "literary."

## TWO DISTINCTIONS: GENERAL AND SPECIFIC; ABSTRACT AND CONCRETE

A general word refers to a group, a class, and a specific word refers to a member of that class. *Tree* is a general word, but *oak*, *elm*, *poplar* are specific. We must remember, however, that the terms *general* and *specific* are relative, not absolute. *Coat*, for example, is more specific than *garment*, for a coat is a kind of garment. But *coat*, on the other hand, is more general than *hunting jacket*, for a hunting jacket is a kind of coat. So with our trees above. *Oak* is more specific than *tree* but more general than *black oak* or *water oak* or *white oak*.

The specific word tends to give color and tang, tends to appeal to the imagination. Suppose we write: "He saw a ship on the horizon." What can our reader's imagination do with that? It can put some sort of floating object, large, man-made, and designed for transportation, on the imagined horizon. But what is the shape of the object? Will there be a smudge of smoke or the glint of white sail? The word *ship* is a general word and, therefore, cannot give a vivid image in that split second in which the reader's eye rests upon the sentence. Suppose we substitute *liner*, *schooner*, *brig*, *tanker*, *sloop*, *junk*, or some other specific word. Then there is something for the imagination to seize on. There is no blur on the horizon; there is a shape.

But suppose, one may object, that we write *brig* and that the reader does not know what rig such a craft carries. Does he then have a shape on the horizon? Most readers would get the glint of sail and not the smudge of smoke, for their information might go that far. The specific word, however, does more than give, or appeal to, information. The mere fact of the use of the specific word gives some sort of nudge to the imagination, gives some sense of knowingness, makes the reader kid himself a bit. If we use the word *brig*, even the reader totally ignorant of nautical matters, as most of us are, feels, just for the moment, a little like an old salt.

There is another distinction which is important in our choice of words. It has to do with concreteness and abstraction. *Peach*, *pear*, *quince*, *apple*, and *apricot* are *concrete* words. The word *peach* implies certain qualities: a certain shape, a certain color, a certain kind of sweetness. But *peach* implies these qualities as "grown together," as we should actually find them embodied in a peach. (The Latin word from which *concrete* derives means literally "grown together.") We can, of course, *abstract* (this word literally means "take away") these qualities from the actual peach and refer to

them in isolation: *sweetness, fuzziness, softness*. Isolating these qualities in such fashion, we get a set of *abstract* words. *Sweetness* isolates a quality common to peaches, and of course, to many other things; the quality is thought of as an idea in its own right.

Words that refer to ideas, qualities, and characteristics *as such* are usually abstract. Words that name classes of objects and classes of actions are usually general. Words that refer to particular objects and particular actions are usually both concrete and specific. These are, on the whole, our most vivid words; they reflect immediately the world of things known to our senses. This comment is not meant to imply that concrete and specific words are somehow “better” than abstract and general words. For some purposes they are indeed better, but for others, not. The world of ideas and concepts requires its terms just as urgently as does the world of particular things.

### ■ Applications

- I Make a list of the concrete words in the passages of description quoted on pages 180, 181, and 182. Make another list of the concrete words in the passages quoted on pages 77, 86, and 98. Which tend to use the greater proportion of concrete words? Why?
- II Compare, in the matter of abstract-general and concrete-specific diction, the passage quoted from “The Encantadas” (page 166) with that quoted from *Robinson Crusoe* (page 201). Can you account for the choice of diction in terms of what each author is trying to do? About which of the two scenes described do you have more facts? Which do you visualize more vividly?
- III Assume that, in an account of a motor trip through one of the New England states, you have written the following paragraphs:

We stopped the car beside the stone wall near the gate that had led to the farmhouse door. The house was gray and unpainted. It must have been un-lived in for years. Some of the windows were broken. The roof was in disrepair.

The house was set in what had been a thriving apple orchard, and now on this October day, the old trees were worth looking at. A majority of them were filled with fruit. The sun was shining, and the sight was very pretty, even though some of the trees were rotted. A lot of them had vines growing up their trunks, and Jim said it was poison ivy.

Rewrite this passage so as to make the reader see the scene. Your revision will certainly call for changes in diction, but do not hesitate to make more extensive changes.

### *The misuse of abstract and general words*

Much writing that is woolly and clouded, difficult to read, clogged and ineffective, is writing that is filled with general and abstract words. For example:

Quite significantly, the emphasis is being placed upon vocational intelligence, which is based upon adequate occupational information for all pupils in secondary schools. . . . This emphasis upon vocational guidance for the purpose of making young people intelligent concerning the world of occupations and the requirements for entering occupations need not conflict seriously with other views of guidance that take into account everything pertaining to the education of the pupil.

There are a number of things wrong with this flabby statement, among them, the large number of abstract words. The author might have written:

High schools today insist that the student learn enough about jobs to choose his own job wisely. The student needs to learn what various jobs pay, what training they require, and what kinds of people find them interesting. He can learn these things while he is learning the other things that schools are supposed to teach. Both kinds of learning are preparations for life, and one need not interfere with the other.

The rewritten version still makes use of general and abstract words (*training, preparation*, and so on); but some of the cloudiest of the abstractions (*vocational intelligence, occupational information*) have been removed, and the rewritten version is not only simpler but has more force.

Many subjects, however, require general and abstract words. For example, compare these two ways of saying the same thing: (1) "A child needs sympathy." (2) "A child does not like frowns. Cold looks cow him. He is fearful when he hears harsh words." The second account is long-winded; even so, the concrete words do not convey fully the meaning of the one abstract word *sympathy*.

The writer cannot, and need not try to, avoid abstract and general words. But he ought not to fall into the slovenly habit of using them without thought. In any case, he should remember that a sprinkling of concrete and specific words can be used to lighten the numbing weight of piled-up abstractions. To illustrate, compare:

(1) A child needs sympathy. Tolerance of his mistakes and the sense of understanding and comradeship provide the proper stimulus for his developing personality. Conversely, an environment defective in sympathy and understanding can be positively thwarting; it can lead to repressions and thus lay the foundation for ruinous personality problems.

(2) A child needs sympathy. He didn't intend to smash the vase or to hurt the cat when he pulled its tail. Tolerance of mistakes and some understanding is necessary if he is to feel that he is a comrade. Acceptance as a comrade stimulates him to become a better comrade. He grows and develops toward responsibility. But he finds it hard to grow normally in a cold and repressive atmosphere. The meaningless spanking—meaningless to him, since he had no intention of breaking the vase—drives him in on himself. He becomes confused and repressed. Some of these confusions and repressions may linger into adult life.

In choosing his words, the overriding consideration, of course, will always be the particular effect that the writer wishes to obtain. Description and narration, for example, thrive on the concrete and the specific. Note the number of concrete and specific terms in the following passage:

He knew the inchoate sharp excitement of hot dandelions in young Spring grass at noon; the smell of cellars, cobwebs, and built-on secret earth; in July, of watermelons bedded in sweet hay, inside a farmer's covered wagon; of cantaloupe and crated peaches; and the scent of orange rind, bitter-sweet, before a fire of coals.

— THOMAS WOLFE: *Look Homeward, Angel*

Exposition and argument, on the other hand, by their very nature, call for a diction in which general and abstract words are important.

Marx's interpretation of the past is explicit and realistic; his forecast of the future seems to me vague and idealistic. I have called it utopian, but you object to that word. I do not insist on it. I will even surrender the word "idealistic." But the point is this. Marx finds that in the past the effective force that has determined social change is the economic class conflict. He points out that this economic class conflict is working to undermine our capitalistic society. Very well. If then I project this explanation of social changes into the future, what does it tell me? It seems to tell me that there will be in the future what there has been in the past—an endless economic class conflict, and endless replacement of one dominant class by another, an endless transformation of institutions and ideas in accordance with the changes effected by the class conflict.

— CARL BECKER: "The Marxian Philosophy of History,"  
*Everyman His Own Historian: Essays on History and Politics*

## LANGUAGE GROWTH BY EXTENSION OF MEANING

We have said that a word has not only a specific meaning but also implied meanings. The implied meanings are obviously less definite than the specific meaning, and therefore less stable and more amenable to change. In scientific language the specific meanings are rigidly stabilized, and the hazy and shifting implied meanings are, in so far as possible, eliminated. In a colorful and racy use of everyday language, just the reverse is the case. The implied meanings are rich and important. We are often tempted to use a word, not *literally* (that is, adhering strictly to the specific meaning), but *figuratively*, stressing the associations of the word. It is through such a process that words have shifted their meanings in the past; but this process of extension of meaning is constantly at work even in our own time. Let us consider an illustration of the process.

The casual and unthinking view of language sees each word as fastened neatly and tightly to a certain specific object: *weasel* means a certain kind of small, furry mammal of slender body, that moves furtively, preys on birds, rats, and rabbits, sucking their blood, and occasionally also sucking eggs; *cooking* means the preparation of food by exposing it to heat; *spade* means an instrument for digging in the earth. But words are not actually so neatly fastened to the objects for which they stand. Even when we are determined to speak forthrightly and "call a spade a spade," we rarely do so. It is against the nature of language that we should be able to do so.

For example, Bob, who is determined to call a spade a spade, says: "Well, Joe has weaseled out on us again. Yesterday when I told him the Collins deal was finally cooking, he pretended he had never heard of it and said he wouldn't buy a pig in a poke." But obviously one is not calling a spade a *spade* when he attributes to another human being the actions of a weasel, describes the preparation of a business deal as a piece of cookery, and makes the agreement to be signed the purchase of a pig enclosed in a bag.

*Weasel* and *cooking* — not to mention the pig — are not being used literally here; their meanings have been extended through analogy. In the case of *cooking* the extension of meaning is very easy to grasp: one sort of preparation — cooking — is extended to mean another and more general sort of preparation. *Weaseling* is more difficult. There may be some implication of "weasel words," that is, words that have had the substance sucked out of them, like eggs sucked by a weasel; but the more probable analogy here is that between Joe's wriggling out of his promise and the weasel's

bodily movements as it glides through apparently impossibly small apertures.

But the point to be made here does not concern the basis for the analogy, whether of physical resemblance (the *jaws* of a vise), similarity of function (the *key* to a puzzle), similarity of effect (a *shining* example), or anything else. The point to be made is, rather, that people normally use words in this way, extending, stretching, twisting their meanings, so that they apply to other objects or actions or situations than those to which they originally applied. This is the *metaphorical* process, about which we shall have more to say in the next chapter. The essence of metaphor inheres in this transfer of meaning, in the application of a word that literally means one thing to something else.

Thus far we have taken our illustrations from common words. But less common words and learned words will illustrate the same process of extension of meaning. Indeed, most of our words that express complex ideas and relationships have been built up out of simpler words. For example, we say, "His generosity caused him to overlook my fault." *Overlook* here means to "disregard or ignore indulgently." But *overlook* is obviously made up of the simple words *look* and *over*. To look over an object may imply that one does not let his gaze rest upon that object: his eyes pass over it without noticing it. *Overlook*, then, in the sense of "disregard" is an extension and specialization of one of the implied meanings of *look over*. We have said "one of the meanings," for *look over* obviously implies other possible meanings. Consider the nearly parallel expression "to see over." From it we get the word *oversee*. This word normally means today *to direct, to supervise* — something quite different from "overlook." *Supervise* is built out of the same concepts as *oversee*, for *super* in Latin means "over," and *-vise* comes from the Latin verb *videre* (past participle *visus*) which means "to see." A bishop, by the way, is literally an *overseer*. For *bishop* comes originally from two Greek words: *epi*, which means "over," and *skopein*, which means "to look." Thus, such diverse words as *overlook*, *oversee*, *supervise*, and *bishop* represent particular extensions of much the same primitive literal meaning.

### ***The dictionary: a record of meanings***

The etymology (that is, the derivation and history) of a word is often highly interesting in itself, but knowledge of word origins is also of great practical usefulness. The full mastery of a particular

word frequently entails knowing its root meaning. Possessing that meaning, we acquire a firm grasp on its various later meanings, for we can see them as extended and specialized meanings that have grown out of the original meaning.

As an example, here is the entry in *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* for the word *sad*:

**sad** (sād) *adj.* sād'DER (ē) sād'DIST [AS, *sad* satisfied *sated*]  
 1 *Archaic* 1 firmly established 2 Afflicted with or expressive of grief, downcast, gloomy 3 Characterized by or associated with sorrow, melancholy 4 Afflictive, grievous 5 Dull, somber, — of colors  
 6 a Shocking, wicked — often playfully b *Slang* Inferior

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The word is an adjective (*adj.*) The forms of the comparative and superlative degrees are given, then its derivation (from Anglo-Saxon *saed*). Next, the dictionary lists seven meanings of this word, one of which it designates as archaic (1) and another as slang (6b).

Even so brief an account as this suggests a history of shifting meanings. Inspection of a larger dictionary, such as *Webster's New International Dictionary* or the *Oxford English Dictionary* (also known as *A New English Dictionary*), with its fuller information as to the derivation of the word and its finer discrimination of meanings (including the various earlier meanings), enables us to make out a detailed history of the meanings of the word.

*Sad* is closely related to the German word *satt* ("full to repletion") and to the Latin word *satis* ("enough"), from which we get such modern English words as *saturate* and *satisfied*. But a man who has had a big dinner is torpid and heavy, not lively or restless, and so *sad* came to carry the suggestion of *calm*, *stable*, *earnest*. Shakespeare frequently uses it to mean the opposite of "trifling" or "frivolous." But a person who seems thus sober and serious may be so because he is grieved or melancholy, and the word thereby gradually took on its modern meaning of "mournful" or "grieved." But we must not end this account without mentioning other lines of development. The sense of *torpid* or *heavy* was extended from animate beings, which can eat to repletion, to inanimate things which cannot — to bread, for example, that fails to rise, or to a heavy laundry iron. In this connection the student should look up the word *sadiron*.

Meaning 5 (dull, somber, — of colors) represents still another such extension. It means the kind of color which a sobersides (as opposed to a gay and sprightly person) would wear, that is, dull, sober colors.



Has the process of extension now ceased? Hardly. Meaning 6a represents a fairly late instance of it. In mock deprecation, a young fellow might be called "a sad young dog," as though his conduct caused horror and grief. Meaning 6b is a later extension still, one that has not yet been approved by careful speakers as "good English." In such a phrase as "sad sack" this meaning of *sad* has temporarily gained wide currency (though in formal American English we tend to prefer the word *sorry*: a sorry team, a sorry outfit, a sorry job). If meaning 6b ever establishes itself in standard English, the dictionary will remove the characterization "slang." (Some terms which began as slang have found their way into the language and into good usage; but a vastly greater number have enjoyed a brief popularity, have been discarded, and are now forgotten or remembered only by scholars.)

The definition of a word is, then, a somewhat more complex business than one might suppose. It consists frequently not just of *the* meaning, but of interrelated sets of meanings, some of which are current and some of which are not, and some of which have been accepted into good society and some of which are merely clinging to the fringes of society. A word which is appropriate in one context obviously might be grossly out of place in another.

## ■ Applications

- 1 Following are entries for the word *sad* from the *American College Dictionary*<sup>1</sup> and *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*:<sup>2</sup>

**sad** (sād), *adj.* **sadder, saddest.** 1. sorrowful or mournful to feel *sad* 2. expressive of or characterized by sorrow *sad looks* 3. causing sorrow *a sad disappointment* 4. (of color) somber, dark, or dull 5. *Often Humorous* deplorably bad; shocking *a sad attempt* 6. *Dial* soggy or doughy *sad bread* 7. *Archaic* firm or steadfast. [ME; OE *sād*, c. G *satt*, Goth. *saths* full, sated, akin to L *sat*, *satis* enough, *satur* sated, Gk. *hadēn* enough] —**sad-ly** (sād/ly), *adv.* —**Syn.** 1. unhappy, despondent, disconsolate, **SAD**, **DEPRESSED**, **DEJECTED**, **MELANCHOLY** describe states of low spirits **SAD**, the general term, varies in its suggestion from a slight, momentary unhappiness to deep-felt grief, or to a continuous state of combined pensiveness, wistfulness, and resignation sorrowful and *sad*, *sad* and *lonely*. **Depressed** refers to a temporary lapse in natural buoyancy because of fatigue, unhappiness, a sense of being unable to change unsatisfactory conditions, or the like *depressed by a visit to the slums* **DEJECTED**, though also referring to a temporary state of discouragement caused by some definite event or circumstance, implies lower spirits, being cast down by disappointment, frustration, and the like *dejected over losing one's position* **MELANCHOLY** describes a state caused rather by temperament and a chronically gloomy outlook than by any external reason. *habitually melancholy*.

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<sup>2</sup> *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*, College Edition, copyright 1960 by The World Publishing Company.

**sad** (sad), *adj.* [SADDER (-ēr), SADDEST (-ist)], [ME.; AS. *sæd*, sated, full, hence having feelings associated with satiety; akin to G. *satt*, satisfied (with food, etc.); IE. base *\*səd-*, satisfied, sated, seen also in L. *satis*, enough (cf. SATISFY, SATIETY)], 1. having, expressing, or showing low spirits or sorrow; unhappy; mournful; sorrowful. 2. causing or characterized by dejection, melancholy, or sorrow. 3. dark-colored; dull. 4. [Colloq.] very bad; deplorable: often used as an intensive. 5. [Dial.] heavy, compact, or soggy: said of earth, pastry, etc. 6. [Archaic], sober; trustworthy; firm; constant. **SYN.**—*sad* is the simple, general term, ranging in implication from a mild, momentary unhappiness to a feeling of intense grief; *sorrowful* implies a sadness caused by some specific loss, disappointment, etc. (the death of his dog left him *sorrowful*); *melancholy* suggests a more or less chronic mournfulness or gloominess, or, often, merely a wistful pensiveness (his *melancholy* thoughts about the future); *dejected* implies discouragement or a sinking of spirits, as because of frustration; *depressed* suggests a mood of brooding despondency, as because of fatigue or a sense of futility (the novel left him feeling *depressed*); *doleful* implies a mournful, often lugubrious, sadness (the *doleful* look on a lost child's face).—**ANT.** happy, cheerful.

Compare these entries with the one quoted from *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* on page 257. (If you are using some other dictionary, look up *sad* in it.) How do the entries vary in (1) the information they include and (2) the manner in which this information is presented? Which entry do you find most satisfactory?

II Look up the origin of the following words:

nostril	Bible	fast ( <i>adj.</i> )
thrilling	fine ( <i>adj.</i> )	sympathetic
gerrymander	infant	malaria
urbane	silly	melancholy

Does knowledge of its origin clarify the meaning of any one of these words? Does it enable you to understand the relationship between current discrepant meanings (that is, "He made a *fast* trip," and "The boat was made *fast* to the pier"; or "This *fine* print hurts my eyes" and "He was a big, *fine*, up-standing man")? Does knowledge of the origin of the word help account for such uses as "legal *infant*" and "the *Book*" (as applied to the Bible)?

III With the help of the dictionary discriminate as carefully as you can among the words in the following groups:

- 1 sulky, petulant, peevish, sullen, morose, crabbed, surly
- 2 skeptic, infidel, atheist, freethinker, agnostic
- 3 reasonable, just, moderate, equitable, fair-minded, judicial
- 4 belief, faith, persuasion, conviction, assurance, reliance
- 5 brave, daring, courageous, fearless, valiant, dauntless

Does a knowledge of the origin of the word throw light upon the special connotations of any of these words?

## THE COMPANY A WORD KEEPS: COLLOQUIAL, INFORMAL, AND FORMAL

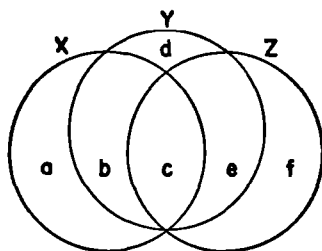
Earlier, in discussing the implied meanings of words, we touched briefly upon the way in which these meanings may determine the appropriateness of a word for a particular context (page 251). The word *steed*, we saw, would be proper for some contexts, *nag* for others, and *horse* for still others. But the problem of appropriateness is important and deserves fuller treatment.

In the first place, there is what may be called the dignity and social standing of the word. Like human beings, a word tends to be known by the company it keeps. Words like *caboodle* and *gumption* are good colloquial words and perfectly appropriate to the informal give-and-take of conversation. But they would be out of place in a dignified and formal utterance. For example, a speech welcoming a great public figure in which he was complimented on his "statesman-like gumption" would be absurd. To take another example, many of us use the slang term *guy*, and though, like much slang, it has lost what pungency it may once have had, its rather flippancy is not inappropriate in some contexts. But it would be foolish to welcome our elder statesman by complimenting him on being a "wise and venerable guy." The shoe, it is only fair to say, can pinch the other foot. Certain literary and rather highfalutin terms, in a *colloquial* context, sound just as absurd. We do not praise a friend for his "dexterity" or for his "erudition," not, at least, when we meet him on the street or chat with him across the table.

The fact that words are known by the company they keep does not, however, justify snobbishness in diction. Pomposity is the worst of all faults. Words must be used with tact and common sense. But the comments made above do point to certain areas of usage of which most of us are already more or less aware. The various kinds of diction (and their necessary overlappings) are conveniently represented in the diagram on page 261.<sup>3</sup>

Modern slang, for example, falls into segment *e* — and possibly *d*. It would be properly available for colloquial and informal writing. (But segments *d* and *e*, of course, include more than slang: they include colloquial terms of all kinds that do not occur in formal literary English.) Segment *a* includes the terms that occur only in formal literary English, but the overlap of formal literary English with colloquial and illiterate English is large — so large that most

<sup>3</sup> From *The American College Dictionary*, ed. by Clarence L. Barnhart, copyright, 1956, by Random House, Inc.



The three circles X, Y, Z, represent the three sets of language habits indicated above.

X—formal literary English, the words, the expressions, and the structures one finds in serious books.

Y—colloquial English, the words, expressions, and the structures of the informal but polite conversation of cultivated people.

Z—illiterate English, the words, the expressions, and the structures of the language of the uneducated.

b, c, and e represent the overlappings of the three types of English.

c—that which is common to all three: formal literary English, colloquial English, and illiterate English.

b—that which is common to both formal literary English and colloquial English.

e—that which is common to both colloquial English and illiterate English.

a, d, and f represent those portions of each type of English that are peculiar to that particular set of language habits.

of the words used in writings of the most formal style are to be found in writings at the other extreme of style.

It would be misleading, therefore, to suggest that there is a mechanical rule for selecting the diction that one uses in an informal essay, or in a formal treatise, or to express the dialogue of "low characters" in a novel. The degrees of elevation of style and shadings of formality and informality are so many — and vary so much even within one work — that we cannot hope to find our appropriate diction segregated for us in one compartment. But our chart should make plain that in this matter of levels of diction, the dictionary can be of real help. It marks, as such, colloquial words, slang, technical words, and so on. Yet recourse to the dictionary is not a substitute for the student's developing a feeling for language. The dictionary can help, but wide reading and practice in writing can help even more.

The student already has a more sensitive feeling for language than he realizes. It would not occur to the student — except as a joke — to say to a friend: "I am trying to ascertain the assignment for next week in English. The amiable pedagogue who directs our labors was inaudible to me, though I think he must have mumbled something. Can you advise me?" Even though the student is not likely to err in the direction of the pompous and the ornate, he

may very well be tempted into a colloquial and slangy style. He *might* write for his history instructor: "I think that Andrew Johnson got a raw deal from Congress. He was a pretty cantankerous customer, I have to admit, and mighty stubborn. Lots of people just didn't like the cut of his jib. But I think he was honest as the devil."

## ■ Applications

- I Rewrite the short passage about Andrew Johnson above to make it more formal.
- II Rewrite the following sentences, removing (a) any stilted diction and (b) any slang or illiterate diction. In general try to make the diction fit an informal standard.
  - 1 We approached Emporium City from Route 60, driving like a bat out of hell.
  - 2 Miss Warner was a young creature of patrician elegance and of disdainful hauteur but really pretty dumb.
  - 3 It sure was picturesque! Titanic vistas solicited our view. It was all mighty grand.
- III The following passages are quite informal — even colloquial — in diction and expression. Rewrite them so as to make them as formal as possible.

A I could recognize big changes from Commerce down. Beaver Dam Rock was out in the middle of the river now, and throwing a prodigious "break"; it used to be close to the shore, and boats went down outside of it. A big island that used to be away out in mid-river has retired to the Missouri shore, and boats do not go near it any more. The island called Jacket Pattern is whittled down to a wedge now, and is booked for early destruction. Goose Island is all gone but a little dab, the size of a steamboat. The perilous "Graveyard," along whose numberless wrecks we used to pick our way so slowly and gingerly, is far away from the channel now, and a terror to nobody. One of the islands formerly called the Two Sisters is gone entirely; the other, which used to lie close to the Illinois shore, is now on the Missouri side, a mile away; it is joined solidly to the shore, and it takes a sharp eye to see where the seam is — but it is Illinois ground yet, and the people who live on it have to ferry themselves over and work the Illinois roads and pay Illinois taxes: singular state of things!

— SAMUEL L. CLEMENS: *Life on the Mississippi*

**B** Educationally, Exeter is a great school but its teachings went deeper than ancient history or Latin (which was compulsory when I was there). It taught virtue, an old-fashioned word, that was instilled like art appreciation. If you don't catch the students pretty young, they will never learn virtue any more than they will ever learn Latin.

Today I think there should be a course in every prep school (and in every high school) called Virtue 1, which would teach simple honesty, candor, courage and conviction. I am alarmed not only at the prevalence of cheating in the nation's schools but, most importantly, at the fact that no one considers it wrong. No wonder it's so hard to find an honest cop. It's fashionable to say that the cops are on the take because they're poorly paid and I'm sure low pay is part of the answer. But you could pay every cop in the land \$50,000 a year and, if virtue has not been inculcated in him at a fairly early age, he'll still be on the take because a fellow can always use a few extra bucks. — JOHN CROSBY: "Old School Tie" <sup>4</sup>

## HOW ASSOCIATIONS CONTROL MEANINGS

Thus far we have seen how associated meanings determine what may be called the social tone of a word. But we must go on to consider the very important way in which these meanings actually determine, though sometimes subtly, the effect of the word, that is, the way in which they actually determine meaning. In our time especially, propaganda and advertising have made this whole matter very important.

A group of words that points to more or less the same thing may range in their associations from highly favorable to highly unfavorable. For example, we may call an agriculturist a "farmer," a "planter," a "tiller of the soil," or, in more exalted fashion, "the partner of Mother Nature"; but we can also refer to him as a "rube," a "hayseed," or a "hick." Few of our words merely *name* something. They imply a judgment about its value as well. They make a favorable or an unfavorable evaluation. Consider, for example, the following table of rough synonyms:

FAVORABLE	NEUTRAL	UNFAVORABLE
highest military leadership	general staff	army brass
motor sedan, cabriolet, convertible	automobile	jalopy
secret agent	informant	stool pigeon
cherub	child	brat
Democratic (or Republican) statesman	party leader	political boss
self-control	discipline	regimentation

<sup>4</sup> From John Crosby, "Old School Tie," *New York Herald Tribune*, October 21, 1960.

By choosing terms with the appropriate associations, we can easily color our whole account of a man or an event or an idea. Much of the effectiveness of this method depends upon the fact that the writer ostensibly is only pointing to certain things, only naming them: the damaging (or ennobling) implications are, as it were, smuggled in surreptitiously. Notice how heavily the following passage from an essay by H. L. Mencken leans upon this device. (The italics are supplied by the present authors.)

"The Ride of the Valkyrie" has a certain intrinsic value as pure music; played by a competent orchestra it may give civilized pleasure. But as it is commonly performed in an opera house, with a *posse* of fat *beldames* throwing themselves about the stage, it can produce the effect of a dose of ipecacuanha. The sort of person who actually delights in such spectacles is the sort of person who delights in plush furniture. Such half-wits are in a majority in every opera house west of the Rhine. They go to the opera, not to hear music, not even to hear bad music, but merely to see a more or less obscene *circus*.

— H. L. MENCKEN: "Opera," *Prejudices: Second Series*

As a matter of fact, Mencken has clearly expressed his attitude. But this attitude is certainly given point and vividness by the implications of such a phrase as "posse of fat beldames." The effect depends upon implications as well as upon denunciation.

The power of association is also illustrated by our recourse to *euphemisms*. Certain words, even necessary words, which refer to unpleasant things, are avoided in favor of softening expressions or indirect references. In many contexts "bastard" is felt to be too brutal; so "illegitimate" is substituted for it. Even a word like "died" may be shunned in favor of "deceased," or "passed away," or "went to his reward." Undertakers have taken to calling themselves "morticians," and butchers in some parts of the country prefer to be known as "meat-cutters." Whatever one may think of the substitutions, they at least testify to the power of past associations and the desire of men to avoid words with unpleasant or disparaging associations.

Here follows the account of an incident as it might be reported by a relatively impartial writer:

Democratic (or Republican) Senator Briggs expressed surprise at being met by reporters. He told them that he had no comment to make on the "Whitlow deal." He said that he had not known that Whitlow was in the employ of General Aircraft and observed that the suggestion that he had received favors from Whitlow was an attempt to discredit him.

How might a hostile reporter describe the incident? He would perhaps give an account something like this:

Senator Briggs, Democratic (or Republican) wheelhorse, was obviously startled to find himself confronted by newspapermen. He stubbornly refused to comment on what he called the "Whitlow deal" and professed not to have known that Whitlow was a lobbyist. The Senator complained that he was being smeared.

The second account seems to be substantially the same as the first. The "facts" are not appreciably altered. But the emotional coloring, and, with it, the intended effect on the reader, have been sharply altered. The senator is now a "wheelhorse," with its suggestions of a hardened and (probably) calloused political conscience. Whitlow is a "lobbyist," and again suggestions of political corruption are insinuated. Moreover, the senator's actions and speech ("obviously startled," "stubbornly refused," "professed not to have known," and "complained") are made to suggest guilt.

Now the point in this comparison of the two accounts is not to indicate that the drier, more objective account is necessarily "truer" and therefore to be preferred. Our estimable fictitious senator may, in fact, be quite guilty, and the writer of the second account may have given us the more accurate account of what actually happened in the interview. (It is even conceivable that the first account was written by a reporter who was pretty certain of the senator's guilty conduct but whose editor had ordered him to play down any suggestion of guilt. In that event, the first account would have to be regarded as biased.) The point to be made is this: The coloring of attitudes in a piece of writing is extremely important and is, indeed, an integral part of its "meaning."

### ■ *Applications*

- I For the following words, try to find synonyms (or generally synonymous words or phrases) of opposite associations:

rebellion	harsh	dictator
tycoon	reformer	liberal
elegant	conventional	ward leader
discrimination	diplomacy	theoretical

- II Alter the diction of the following passages in order to gain (a) a more favorable tone; (b) a less favorable tone. (The sample sentence, with its optional terms, will illustrate the kind of alteration required.)



The veteran (*still-youthful, aging*) movie star walked (*swept, minced*) into the strong (*brilliant, harsh*) light and paused for a moment to look at (*glance at, ogle*) the crowd.

- 1 The old woman walked up to the counter and priced the scarf. She hesitated, seemed to think for a moment, and then opened her black purse, and extracted a five-dollar bill. She laid it on the counter and began to finger the bright piece of cloth.
- 2 The mayor, a stocky man of middle age, stepped forward to the microphone with a sheaf of papers in his hand. He placed these on the lectern and cleared his throat. His face was serious as he began his speech.
- 3 The two boys, fifteen and seventeen, were ill at ease when they appeared before Judge Baker, who regarded them impersonally from the bench. An atmosphere of tension prevailed in the courtroom as lawyers began shuffling their papers.

## WORN-OUT WORDS AND CLICHÉS

We began this chapter by saying that the problem of diction is that of finding the right words, the words which will say exactly what the writer wants to say. But we have seen that exactness in language cannot be attained mechanically, that the exactness required works on a number of levels and in a number of different ways. Words are not static. They have a history; they have biographies; and even have, one is tempted to say, personalities. Most of all, since they are not changeless and inflexible, but to some extent plastic, changing their shape a little under the pressure of the context in which they occur, they offer a continual stimulus and challenge to the imagination of the writer.

Language, as we have seen, changes, develops, grows, and, by the same token, language wears out. We are not thinking, however, of the normal sloughing off of words that have died natural deaths and now either do not occur in a modern dictionary at all or, if they do occur, are marked *obsolete* (*shoon* for *shoes*) or *archaic* (*e'en* for *even*). We are thinking rather of words that have been thoughtlessly used in certain contexts so often that they have lost nearly all their force. Whether we call these threadbare expressions "trite" or "hackneyed" or term them "stereotypes" and "clichés" is of little importance.

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### *Common stereotypes, including slang*

A jargon made up of stereotypes and clichés is produced by writers who do not think out what they want to say but find a worn groove in the language down which they let their thoughts slide. Books on rhetoric sometimes supply lists of threadbare expressions against which the student is warned: "the more the merrier," "last but not least," "to trip the light fantastic toe." Hackneyed phrases of this sort have probably by now become too literary, too old-fashioned, to offer much temptation to a modern student—even to a lazy one. But stereotyping continues, and much of the writing and conversation to which we are constantly exposed is a tissue of trite expressions. The sports page, for example, will yield stereotypes in abundance. Mr. Frank Sullivan amusingly exhibits some of these in question-and-answer form:

- Q If [the teams] don't roll up a score what do they do?  
A They battle to a scoreless tie.  
Q What do they hang up?  
A A victory. Or, they pull down a victory.  
Q Which means that they do what to the opposing team?  
A They take the measure of the opposing team, or take it into camp.  
Q And the opposing team?  
A Drops a game, or bows in defeat.  
Q This dropping, or bowing, constitutes what kind of blow for the losing team?  
A It is a crushing blow to its hopes of annexing the Eastern championship. Visions of the Rose Bowl fade.  
Q So what follows as a result of the defeat?  
A A drastic shakeup follows as a result of the shellacking at the hands of Cornell last Saturday.  
Q And what is developed?  
A A new line of attack.  
Q Mr. Smith, how is the first quarter of a football game commonly referred to?  
A As the initial period. — FRANK SULLIVAN: "Football Is King"

Society-page editors have their own brand of stereotypes: "social function," "society bud," "gala affair." To come still closer home, there is slang. Some slang expressions may once have been pungent and colorful. The sportswriter who first described the strike-out of a slugging batter by saying "he made three dents in the atmosphere" conveyed the scene sharply and humorously. When slang is thus "tailor-made" for the occasion, it may be bright and perceptive, though, if it is still fresh and vivid, it is a question whether it

ought to be viewed as "slang" at all. But, as most of us use it, slang is a worn and impoverished language, not bright and irreverent and lively, but stale and dead. "the party was a washout", "I'm fed up", "he crabbed a lot", "he blew his top". The real sin committed here is not so much that of bringing slang's flippant associations into a serious context. We do not often commit this fault. The real sin in using slang consists in using a thin and inexpressive language—slang that has lost the edge of slang.

### *Jargon: the degenerative disease of prose*

We have to step up, however, to a somewhat more exalted plane to find the stereotypes which most damage modern prose and which are likely to do the student most harm. These stereotypes are such expressions as "along the lines of," "in the last analysis," "socio-economic considerations," "the world of business affairs," "according to a usually reliable source." Such locutions puff out many an official document, many a political speech, and it must be admitted, many a professor's lecture or article.

In the following excerpt Malcolm Cowley discusses an example of academic jargon.

An example that comes to hand is the central idea of an article by Norman E. Green, printed in the February, 1956, issue of the *American Sociological Review*. In English his argument might read as follows:

"Rich people live in big houses set farther apart than those of poor people. By looking at an aerial photograph of any American city, we can distinguish the richer from the poorer neighborhoods.

I won't have to labor over a sociological expression of the same idea, because Mr. Green has saved me the trouble. Here is part of his contribution to comparative linguistics. In effect, it was hypothesized, he says—a sociologist must never say "I assumed," much less "I guessed"—"that certain physical data categories including housing types and densities, land use characteristics, and ecological location—not just "location, mind you but ecological location—which is almost equivalent to locational location—constitute a scalable content area. This could be called a continuum of residential desirability. Likewise, it was hypothesized that several social data categories, describing the same census tracts, and referring generally to the social stratification system of the city, would also be scalable. This scale could be called a continuum of socio-economic status. Thirdly, it was hypothesized that there would be a high positive correlation between the scale types on each continuum.

Here, after ninety-four words, Mr. Green is stating, or concealing, an assumption with which most laymen would have started, that rich

people live in good neighborhoods. He is now almost ready for his deduction, or snapper.

"This relationship would define certain linkages between the social and physical structure of the city. It would also provide a precise definition of the commonalities among several spatial distributions. By the same token, the correlation between the residential desirability scale and the continuum of socio-economic status would provide an estimate of the predictive value of aerial photographic data relative to the social ecology of the city.

Mr. Green has used 160 words — counting "socio-economic" as only one — to express an idea that a layman would have stated in thirty-three. As a matter of fact, he has used many more than 160 words, since the whole article is an elaboration of this one thesis. Whatever may be the virtues of the sociological style — or Socspeak, as George Orwell might have called it — it is not specifically designed to save ink and paper — MALCOLM COWLEY *Sociological Habit Patterns in Linguistic Transmogrification*<sup>5</sup>

Whether we call such verbiage officialese, when it emanates from some government bureau, or gobbledygook (a term invented by a former Congressman, Maury Maverick), or simply jargon, its empty wordiness is characteristic. Here are two samples culled from *College English* — a fact which should warn us that anyone can fall prey to jargon, even those who undertake to teach others how to write effective English.

(1) If we start at one of the extremes of the continuum, we shall find a grouping around a point of great vitality and wide appeal. Keenly aware of the painstaking scholarship and of the high creative effort that over the centuries has accumulated the body of subject matter we call "English," a group of our ablest teachers conceive their role to be to transmit this product of human endeavor, this hard won store of learning and of art, this rich portion of man's heritage of culture, to the oncoming generations, and to imbue them with some perception of its worth.

(2) But whether we are trained statisticians or not, we can improve the results of our examination speeches and themes. First of all, we can, without great difficulty, develop better controlled problems. There are various degrees of control possible in examination speeches and themes, and, within reasonable limits, it would seem as though the greater the control the more meaningful the test results. Complete freedom of choice of topic and material puts a premium upon accidental inspiration and upon glibness rather than thoughtfulness. A single assigned topic is palpably unfair since it may strike the interest and experience of some and yet leave others untouched.

<sup>5</sup> "Sociological Habit Patterns in Linguistic Transmogrification," *The Reporter*, September 20, 1956.

These two passages have been somewhat unfairly taken out of context. Moreover, the topics discussed are not precisely colorful and exciting. Is it fair to condemn their authors for having written jargon? How else could either writer have said what he had to say?

It is true that we have torn the passages out of context and that the subject matter is difficult. Yet, even so, the symptoms of jargon are present. Consider the second excerpt: Both "puts a premium upon" and "palpably unfair" are clearly stereotypes. Moreover, what does the author gain by specifying "without great difficulty" and "within reasonable limits"? Are these specifications necessary? Could they not be assumed? Has not the writer put them in for rhetorical purposes, that is, to "dress up" his statement rather than to make necessary qualifications?

### *Jargon: some antidotes*

Jargon, of course, involves more than stereotypes. Jargon is nearly always compounded of clusters of general and abstract words. Though there is no certain prescription against jargon, it is easy to state one or two practical antidotes.

(1) The student should try to use words that are as specific and concrete as possible; that is, he should never use a word more general and indefinite than he has to. Hazy and indefinite expressions represent the easy way out for a writer who is too timid to commit himself or too lazy to think through what he wants to say.

(2) The student should avoid stereotypes of all kinds — prefabricated phrasings which come easily to mind but which may not represent precisely his own ideas and emotions. But note this carefully: He should never avoid an *individual* word because it seems simple and common. If the sense calls for a simple, common word, it is generally best to repeat the word, if necessary, again and again. There is little to be said in favor of what is sometimes called *elegant variation*, that is, the substitution of some synonym in order to avoid repetition. Here is an example: "Mr. Jones was a powerful *financier*. As a *tycoon* he had a deep suspicion of socialism. He shared the feelings of his associates who were also *bankers*." The variations are irritating and can be confusing. Either recast the sentences or repeat *financier*.

On the other hand, the student should try to avoid *words strung together* — that is, phrasings — which are common and, for that very reason, probably stereotyped. He cannot avoid all common expressions, nor should he try to avoid them, but he should learn to inspect them carefully before he decides to use them. If he really needs

to say "along the lines of," or if something is really "in consideration of" something else and an emphasis on *consideration* is relevant, then let him use the expression by all means. But it is a good rule to remember that though he need never shy away from an individual *word* because it is common, he ought to be very shy of *phrases* that are common.

(3) The student should try to use live words, remembering that finite verbs are the most powerful words that we have. We can find an instance of the failure to do so in the second sentence of the excerpt from *College English* quoted on page 269.

Keenly aware of the painstaking scholarship and of the high creative effort that over the centuries has accumulated the body of subject matter we call "English," a group of our ablest teachers conceive their role to be to transmit this product of human endeavor, this hard-won store of learning and of art, this rich portion of man's heritage of culture, to the oncoming generations. . . .

This sentence is packed with ideas, but the only finite verb in it (aside from *has accumulated* and *call*, in the two relative clauses) is the verb *conceive*. A participle, *aware*, is made to carry the weight of the first twenty-six words; and the whole latter part of the sentence hangs from two successive infinitives, "to be" and "to transmit." The sentence has so little stamina that it sprawls. It sprawls because the writer has starved it of finite verbs. The author might better have written:

Our ablest teachers realize what effort has gone into the making of that body of subject matter we call "English." They know it is a precious thing, for it embodies the effort of painstaking scholars and of great poets and novelists. They want to transmit this heritage of culture to the oncoming generations.

Finite verbs are more powerful than strings of participles, gerunds, or infinitives. Moreover, a specific verb is usually stronger than a more general verb qualified by modifiers. Compare "He walked along slowly" with "He strolled," "He sauntered," "He dawdled," "He lagged." Frequently, it is true, we need the qualifiers. But we ought not to forget the wealth of concreteness which the English language possesses in its great number of verbs which name specifically, and therefore powerfully, certain modes of action.

(4) Finally, the student ought to remember that simple sentences in normal sentence order (see page 232) rarely degenerate into jargon. An essay so written may be childishly simple, and it can become monotonous; but it will seldom collapse into the spineless flabbiness of jargon.

Jargon, however, is not to be dealt with summarily. It is our most pervasive kind of "bad" style, and, like style in general, it is the product of the interplay of many elements. We shall have to recur to this topic in some of the chapters that follow, especially in the discussion of metaphor.

## ■ Applications

- I The following passage is badly infected with jargon. Try to determine what the author means to say, and then put it into English for him. (You might apply the four antidotes to jargon described on pages 270-71.)

The chemical age gives every highly technical nation a choice between self-sufficiency and trade on whatever barter or bargaining basis it desires, thus upsetting time-honored geographical alignments of monopolies of certain natural products and altering the whole concept of imperialism. This is an entirely new situation for agriculture. For centuries the threat of eventual scarcity of food and land hung over the world. Within a few decades the march of science has brought about a complete reversal. On the one hand the chemist and the technologist have made possible the production of greater and greater quantities of products on less and less land, resulting in enormous surpluses of acreage, crops, and labor. At the same time, ironically enough, the chemist is removing one product after another from the soil into the laboratory, throwing still more land out of cultivation and further reducing the amount of labor needed.

- II Lancelot Hogben, the author of the following passage, is attempting to treat with some sprightliness a subject which for most people is abstruse and painfully dry. Is he successful? If so, how does his choice of diction contribute to his success? How many concrete words does Hogben use? How many abstract words? How does Hogben avoid the sense of formality? Illustrate from his choice of diction. What are the connotations of *bowling*, *petrol*, *car*, *tank*, and *motorcycle*? What are the connotations of *Greeks*, *abacus*, and *counting frame*? Does Hogben actually want the contrast between the associations of the two groups of words? What purpose does it serve? Do the associations of *Good Friday* and *All Fools' Day* clash? What purpose is served by this clash?

[Euclid] was limited by the social culture in which he lived. The Greeks did not live in a world of interest and petrol consumption and bowling analysis. Ratios were not familiar quantities. They

represented a process of division which was carried out with a very stiff instrument the abacus. Proportion did not sit lightly on Euclid's pupils. You can easily see the difficulty of Euclid's pupils. Suppose I know that the petrol consumption of a car is 35 miles to the gallon. I can get the number of miles I can run before filling up by multiplying the number of gallons in the tank by 35. I can get the number of gallons I require by dividing the number of miles I intended to run by 35. The two processes are equally easy in our arithmetic. The arithmetic of the counting frame is different. Multiplying one proper number by another always gives you an exact result which you get by repeated addition. Dividing one proper number by another means finding how many times you can take one away from the other. Usually you have some beads left over on the counting frame. You rarely get an exact answer. So division was a much more difficult process to grasp when people thought that all real numbers were proper numbers. Euclid had to devote a whole book (Book V) to illustrate the simple rules of proportion which are all summed up in the diagonal rule given in the last chapter. Draw two right-angled triangles, one with the two shorter sides 3 and 4 centimetres long, the other with the two shorter sides of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  and 2 inches, compare them, and you will see without difficulty that two triangles having corresponding sides whose lengths are in the same ratio is a situation no more difficult to grasp than the fact that a motorcycle has the same petrol consumption on Good Friday and All Fools' Day.

— LANCELOT HOGBEN, *Mathematics for the Million* \*

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## Chapter Eleven

### Metaphor

In metaphor there is a transfer of meaning — the Greek word from which metaphor is derived means “to transfer” A word that applies literally to one kind of object or idea is applied by analogy to another Thus a ray of sunshine *cuts* the gloom (as if it were a knife), a ship *courses* the seas (its motion likened to that of a greyhound), a man *weasels* out of his promise (as a ferret like animal wriggles through a small hole) <sup>1</sup>

Language normally grows by a process of metaphorical extension, we extend old names to new objects (In fact, someone has happily called metaphors “new namings”) But when, in this process of extension, a metaphor is really absorbed into common language, like the *bed* of a river, it loses its metaphorical force, it becomes a dead metaphor Compare, for example, ‘the bed of a river’ with ‘the dance of life’ The first phrase carries no suggestion that the bed is a place of repose or that the river is sleepy! We use ‘the bed of a river’ as a pure denotation from which the associated meanings that apply to *bed* in its usual senses are quite absent But it is very different with the phrase ‘the dance of life’ This metaphor is still alive The suggestions (of something rhythmic, of patterned movement, even, perhaps, of gaiety and happiness) are meant to be associated with life

The term “dead metaphor” can itself illuminate the problem

<sup>1</sup> In this chapter we have used *metaphor* in the largest and most inclusive sense We have not distinguished metaphor proper from *simile* (an *explicit* comparison usually introduced by *like* or *as* — she glided into the room *like a swan* — he was as bald *as an egg* ) or *metonymy* (the use of a part to designate the whole — he employed twenty *hands* on his farm ) or other such specializations of the metaphoric principle Such classifications are, in our considered opinion, of little practical importance to the writer

now being considered. With "dead" metaphors, we can say, *rigor mortis* has set in: they have no flexibility, no force; they have stiffened into one meaning. Metaphors that are still alive prove that they are alive by their flexibility; and because they are still alive, they can be used to give color and life to a piece of writing. They are concrete and particular; they reflect the world of the senses. They can still excite the imagination.

In metaphors that are still recognizably metaphoric, there are, of course, varying degrees of life. The following examples are not very lively, but they do show that metaphor is a perfectly normal and important part of our normal speech: we say, for example, "John is a good egg"; "Jane is a peach"; "He ran out on the deal"; "That remark threw him for a loss." Such expressions are rather worn and faded. But their original metaphorical character is plain enough, and we still think of them, and use them, as metaphors. The list of expressions that are badly shopworn but are still recognizably metaphors could be extended almost indefinitely: "hot as the devil," "independent as a hog on ice," "lazy as a dog," "crazy as a bat," and so on.

## IMPORTANCE OF METAPHOR IN EVERYDAY LANGUAGE

Our preference for the concrete and the particular, as these examples show, is not only normal; it is deeply and stubbornly rooted in the human mind. Consider the following situation: It is a hot day. We can say, "It is hot" or "It is very hot," or, piling on the intensives, we can say, "It is abominably and excruciatingly hot." But most of us, afflicted with the heat, will resort to metaphor of some kind: "It's hot as hell," or more elaborately, "It's hot as the hinges of hell." Evidently metaphor is felt to add forcefulness, and evidently the forcefulness has some relation to sharpness of detail and concreteness of expression.

That is one point, then: In metaphor, force and sharpness of detail, especially of sensory detail, tend to go together. Indeed, we are usually attracted to metaphor in the first place because ordinary language seems worn and abstract. A second point to be made is this: Metaphor tends to accompany the expression of emotions and attitudes. A strictly scientific purpose would find entirely adequate expression in the statement that it is now 97.6 degrees Fahrenheit and that the humidity is 88.

Let us consider another simple case. Suppose we feel a special

kind of happiness and try to express our feelings. We can say, "I feel happy." Or we can try to find a word which more accurately hits off this special feeling: *merry*, *gay*, *ecstatic*, *cheerful*, *glad*, *jolly*, or *joyous*. There are many synonyms for *happy*, as the dictionary will quickly reveal, and they differ in their shades of meaning. For example, *jolly* suggests heartiness and the good humor that go with comfortable living; *ecstatic* suggests an elevating rapture; *gay* suggests sprightliness, a nimble lightheartedness. We shall do well to consult the dictionary to learn (or remind ourselves of) the wealth of resources at our disposal. Even so, we rarely find an adjective which exactly expresses our feelings. We tend to resort to metaphor. We say "I'm happy as a June bug," or "I feel like a million dollars," or "I'm walking on air this morning," or "I feel like a colt in springtime."

If a feeling is very special or complex, we are usually *forced* to resort to metaphor. Here is the way a writer of fiction expresses the happiness of a young soldier when the brilliant woman who has dazzled him shows him a small attention:

She regarded him with her kindly glances, which made something glow and expand within his chest. It was a delicious feeling, even though it did cut one's breath short now and then. Ecstatically he drank in the sound of her tranquil, seductive talk full of innocent gaiety and of spiritual quietude. His passion appeared to him to flame up and envelop her in blue fiery tongues from head to foot and over her head, while her soul appeared in the center like a big white rose. . . .

— JOSEPH CONRAD: "The Warrior's Soul," *Tales of Hearsay*

The author tries to do justice to the emotion that the young soldier feels, and in doing so, he twice resorts to metaphor. The first is a rather simple and even conventional metaphor of a feeling of warmth within his chest—something that seems to "glow" and to "expand." The second attempts to interpret as well as present the quality of the emotion—the lady is encircled in flame, but the flames, though fierce ("blue fiery tongues"), do not injure her and may even be said to protect her. The white rose, which in his ecstatic vision stands for her soul, is not scorched or shriveled.

### ■ Application

Choose metaphors which will describe *how you feel* in the following situations. Do not necessarily take the first metaphor which comes to mind; try to avoid worn-out metaphor; try

to find a metaphor which describes as accurately as possible your own feelings.

- 1 On getting an A when you would have been happy to settle for the grade of C.
- 2 On getting well splashed by a passing car when on your way to an appointment.
- 3 On your first experience of stage fright.
- 4 On seeing a serious accident.
- 5 On first discovering that a close friend has betrayed your friendship.
- 6 On coming to realize that you have been guilty of a serious fault.

### *Slang as metaphor*

In connection with metaphor it may be profitable to consider again two abuses of language, slang and jargon, which have already been touched upon in the preceding chapter (pages 267-72). The impulse to use slang springs from our preference for the concrete and the particular. Slang expressions are originally metaphoric, and the problem of the misuse of slang cannot properly be solved apart from the more general problem of the use and abuse of figurative language. That is why it does very little good for the instructor to tell the student — or for the student to tell himself — not to use slang, for this advice is essentially negative. The student is right in wanting to make his writing warm, colorful, and lively. What he needs to do, therefore, is not to discard figurative language in favor of abstract expressions; but rather to inspect all his figurative language, *including slang*, in order to improve it as metaphor. He will try to eliminate all metaphors that are worn and trite, or that seem pretentious, or that are discordant with the rest of the composition. The practical result, of course, will be that in this process most of the slang will be sloughed off, but sloughed off *because it proves to be poor and ineffective metaphor*, not because it is figurative. The writer will scarcely be able to avoid the use of metaphor even if he tries. But he wants it to be alive rather than dead, responsible and controlled rather than irresponsible and wild.

### *Jargon and worn-out metaphor*

But why recur to the second general abuse of language, jargon, in this chapter on metaphor? What possible connection can jargon

have with metaphor? The first answer to this question can be put simply: There is an important negative relation. It is the very lack of concrete words and of metaphorical vividness and particularity that makes jargon cloudy and ineffective. A primary way to avoid jargon, then, is to use concrete language, including its extension into metaphor. The spinelessness of jargon is in part the result of the writer's timid avoidance of vigorous metaphor. Even the most timid writer, however, is not actually able to avoid all metaphor; and with this observation we can give a second answer to the question. Jargon characteristically involves stereotypes of all kinds, including stereotyped, and therefore lifeless, metaphor. This connection of jargon with secondhand metaphor is forcefully put by the British writer, George Orwell:

Prose (nowadays) consists less and less of *words* chosen for the sake of their meaning, and more and more of *phrases* tacked together like the sections of a prefabricated henhouse. . . . There is a huge dump of worn-out metaphors which have lost all evocative power and are merely used because they save people the trouble of inventing phrases for themselves. . . . Modern writing at its worst . . . consists in gumming together long strips of words which have already been set in order by someone else.

The student will observe that Orwell himself uses metaphor very effectively: "sections of a prefabricated henhouse," "dump of worn-out metaphors," "gumming together long strips of words." Orwell thus vividly suggests his two points of indictment: the lazy and careless craftsmanship of the writer of jargon and the secondhand quality of the materials he uses.

### *Confused metaphor and half-dead metaphor*

Orwell has hardly exaggerated, and the faults which he points out are found just as frequently in America as in Great Britain. The writer of the passage that follows is attempting to describe the effect of "comic books":

They defy the limits of accepted fact and convention, thus amortizing to apoplexy the ossified arteries of routine thought. But by these very tokens the picture-book fantasy cuts loose the hampering debris of art and artifice and touches the tender spots of universal human desires and aspirations, hidden customarily beneath long accumulated protective coverings of indirection and disguise.

But can one defy a limit? One can, of course, defy another person to set a limit. The comic books may break across boundaries, may

exceed limits, and their authors may defy authorities to set any limits that they will respect. But here it is the comic books that are made to "defy limits," probably because the author was looking for a strong metaphor, and was willing to accept, without asking too many questions of it, the first strong metaphor that he found. The defiance hinted by the comic books has violent results. The comic books amortize the "ossified arteries of routine thought." To "amortize" is to cancel a mortgage. And "amortize," like "mortgage," is related etymologically to Latin *mors*, death. Even so, how can a defiance extinguish a mortgage on the arteries of thought — to the point of apoplexy? People who suffer from hardening of the arteries are subject to strokes of apoplexy. Perhaps the writer is trying to say that the outrageous breaking of the conventions drives certain readers to apoplexy. But he has his apoplectic stroke affect the creaky and antiquated thoughts themselves. The result is a rather amazing mix-up.

In the next sentence, the comic books, having by their defiance ruptured the arteries of conventional thought, proceed to cut loose the "debris of art and artifice." Or rather, it is the fantasy which cuts this debris loose. But "debris" means a scattered mass of materials. Can one cut a person loose from debris? Does one not rather dig a victim *out of* the debris which has fallen upon him? And how can such debris be *worn*, as is evidently the case here, as a "protective covering"? The cutting loose of wreckage, the pulling off of a disguise, and the removal of a protective shell are here thoroughly scrambled. The confusion is not helped when we remember that the debris in question is composed of "art and artifice" and that the agent which cuts it loose is fantasy — something which one usually regards as associated with both art and artifice.

The instance of mixed metaphor that we have just examined was published in a "quality" magazine, and that fact should constitute a warning to the student writer. Try to think out what you want to say. Then be sure that your metaphors are consistent with it, and when they are closely connected, are consistent with one another.

### ■ *Application*

The following passages are taken from articles in reputable magazines. Make a criticism of the use of metaphor in these passages. Where the metaphors seem garbled or inappropriate, rewrite the passage, substituting consistent or appropriate metaphors.

- 
- 1 As his fame was slowly ascending, partly because of this social skill of his, into more illustrious circles, so was it trickling down among the more numerous obscure.
  - 2 The emancipation of the slaves withdrew the Negroes from the maternal wing of the plantation system and threw them into the labor market.
  - 3 Therefore, when he championed his middle class, he instinctively set his face against everything that threatened to substitute quantity for quality — against the encroachments of commerce and the new imperialism which the progressively minded among both Whigs and Tories were imbibing from Chatham. And the caveat against the dangers lurking in materialistic panaceas is not without implications that carry beyond the time and the place.

## THE FUNCTION OF METAPHOR

Thus far we have given our attention to some of the abuses of figurative language. It is high time to give a more positive account of metaphor and to show some of the uses of figurative language. After all, why do we use metaphor? What purpose does it serve? We have already assumed in earlier pages that it has its value in contributing color and liveliness, but if we are to understand why it is one of the great resources of the writer, we shall need to define more clearly what its function is. This is all the more necessary since the conventional account of the uses of metaphor is calculated to mislead. For example, we are in the habit of saying that the purpose of metaphor is to illustrate or to embellish; but these terms can easily suggest that figurative language is a kind of "extra" which may be usefully or gracefully "added on" to a statement, but which is never essential to the statement, never a direct part of what is being said. In accordance with this conventional view, the practical function of metaphor is to give a concrete illustration of some point which has been put more abstractly. Metaphor provides a pleasing decoration, like an attractive wallpaper pasted onto the wall or like a silk ribbon tied around a box of candy. But the trouble is that, in either case, the figure of speech seems to be something which can be left off; and if we misconceive the purposes of metaphor by thinking of it as something external and additional, we shall never come to understand why an understanding of metaphor is absolutely essential to good writing — and to good reading, too.

### *Why scientific statement does not require metaphor*

Let us begin by disposing of a special kind of writing in which metaphor is indeed unnecessary and is merely an addition. If we wish to say " $2 + 2 = 4$ " or that "the square of the hypotenuse of a right triangle is equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides," we shall not require metaphor. Metaphor would be in the way. Such statements as these, however, are very special; the terms used in them are (or aspire to be) pure denotations. As we pointed out in the preceding chapter, if such terms have associations at all, the associations are surely irrelevant. Thus the "words" employed are not being used as words in the usual sense; for most words are capable of metaphorical extension. These scientific terms are, by contrast, rather special symbols, and the purest scientific statements are able to dispense with words altogether: thus  $2 + 2 = 4$ , or  $\text{H}_2\text{SO}_4 + \text{Fe} \rightarrow \text{FeSO}_4 + \text{H}_2 \uparrow$ .

But important as such statements are, they represent a stringently specialized discourse. Most of the discourse which interests us as human beings and which we must use as writers goes far beyond abstract relationships of this kind. Most of our discourse has to do with the "full" world of our human experience, not with the colorless, soundless, abstract world of modern physics, say, or of mathematics.<sup>2</sup>

### *Metaphor as illustration*

It ought to be noted, however, that even the scientific writer very often needs to go beyond this stringently limited abstract discourse, and for him too, metaphor, though frankly employed as illustration, may be highly necessary and useful. The following passage from Bertrand Russell's *The Scientific Outlook* will illustrate this point. The book is addressed to a general audience, and Russell is attempting to convince his reader that "what is actually experienced is much less than one would naturally suppose." He proceeds to analyze a typical experience for us — what happens scientifically when we "see" someone:

You may say, for example, that you see your friend, Mr. Jones, walking along the street: but this is to go far beyond what you have any right to say. You see a succession of coloured patches, traversing

<sup>2</sup> This is not, of course, to question the importance or the reality of such worlds. The scientist can deal with his material only in this abstract way. His language is neither more nor less real than the language of the poet or the novelist. It is merely different. In this connection, the student might reread the discussion of abstract and concrete words (pages 251-51).



a stationary background. These patches, by means of a Pavlov conditioned reflex, bring into your mind the word "Jones," and so you say you see Jones, but other people looking out of their windows from different angles will see something different, owing to the laws of perspective; therefore if they are all seeing Jones, there must be as many different Joneses as there are spectators, and if there is only one true Jones, the sight of him is not vouchsafed to anybody. If we assume for a moment the truth of the account which physics gives, we shall explain what you call "seeing Jones" in some such terms as the following. Little packets of light, called "light quanta," shoot out from the sun, and some of these reach a region where there are atoms of a certain kind, composing Jones's face, and hands, and clothes. These atoms do not themselves exist, but are merely a compendious way of alluding to possible occurrences. Some of the light quanta, when they reach Jones's atoms, upset their internal economy. This causes him to become sunburnt, and to manufacture vitamin D. Others are reflected, and of those that are reflected some enter your eye. They then cause a complicated disturbance of the rods and cones, which, in turn, send a current along the optic nerve. When this current reaches the brain, it produces an event. The event which it produces is that which you call "seeing Jones." As is evident from this account, the connection of "seeing Jones" with Jones is a remote, roundabout causal connection. Jones himself, meanwhile, remains wrapped in mystery. He may be thinking about his dinner, or about how his investments have gone to pieces, or about that umbrella he lost; these thoughts are Jones's, but these are not what you see. — BERTRAND RUSSELL *The Scientific Outlook* \*

The passage may be regarded as an instance of the expository method of illustration (See pages 66-71.) Notice that Russell has completed his analysis with the last statement of the passage, yet apparently he felt that the account might prove too technical and that his reader might fail to understand. Therefore he adds the following statement: "To say that you see Jones is no more correct than it would be, if a ball bounced off a wall in your garden and hit you, to say that the wall had hit you. Indeed, the two cases are closely analogous." Most readers will be grateful for this illustration. Most minds find abstractions so alien to them that they need a concrete statement such as the analogy provides. This is a truth which the writers of all books of scientific popularization know. Even if the writer is able, as Bertrand Russell is able here, to state his analysis directly, the extra illustration — the concrete analogy drawn from daily experience — is helpful.

\* From *The Scientific Outlook* by Bertrand Russell, by permission of George Allen and Unwin, Ltd.

## ■ Applications

- I The author of the following passages originally supplied illustrative or summarizing comparisons to make clearer or more emphatic what he had to say. Here, however, the summarizing comparison has been omitted. Try to supply an appropriate comparison.

An insect, therefore, is not afraid of gravity: it can fall without danger and can cling to the ceiling with remarkable little trouble. It can go in for elegant fantastic forms of support like that of the daddy long legs. But there is a force which is as formidable to an insect as gravitation to a mammal. This is surface tension. A man coming out of a bath carries with him a film of water of about one-fiftieth of an inch in thickness. This weighs about a pound. A wet mouse has to carry about its own weight of water. A wet fly has to lift many times its own weight and, as everyone knows, a fly once wetted by water or any other liquid is in a very serious position indeed. An insect going for a drink is in as great danger as

— J. B. S. HALDANE, 'On Being the Right Size,' *Possible Worlds*

- II In the following passage the author has made much use of illustrative metaphor. Try to restate what is said in language as unmetaphorical as you can devise. Do not be surprised if you find that the rewritten version requires a good many more words than the original passage.

We, then, the animals, consume those stores in our restless living. Serenely, the plants amass them. They turn light's active energy to food, which is potential energy stored for their own benefit.

Animal life lives always in the red: the favorable balance is written on the other side of life's page and it is written in chlorophyll. All else obeys the thermodynamic law that energy forever runs down hill: is lost and degraded. In economic language, this is the law of diminishing returns: and it is obeyed by the cooling stars as by man and all the animals. They float down its Lethe stream. Only chlorophyll fights up against the current. It is the stuff in life that rebels at death, that has never surrendered to entropy, final icy stagnation. It is the little cobweb on which we are all suspended over the abyss.

— DONALD CULROSS PEATTIE, *Flowering Earth*<sup>4</sup>

### *Metaphor as essential statement*

In strict scientific statement, then, metaphor would seem to have no place, and in less strict scientific discussion it would seem to be auxiliary and optional. But we shall make a serious mistake if we

<sup>4</sup> From *Flowering Earth* by Donald Culross Peattie. Copyright 1939, by Donald Culross Peattie. Courtesy of G. P. Putnam's Sons.

conclude that in other kinds of writing metaphor is a device of as little fundamental importance. The truth is quite to the contrary! In most of the writing with which we are concerned — political speeches, articles on international affairs, letters to friends, expressions of opinion, attempts to persuade and convince, essays in which we invite other people to share our experiences and evaluations of life — in these and in nearly all the writing that we shall do, metaphor is a primary device of expression.

The common misconception of metaphor makes it, as we have seen, a mere ornament, and therefore an inessential part of expression. But metaphor is not a mere decoration, an "extra." It often represents not only the most compact and vigorous way of saying a thing — it represents sometimes the only way in which the particular thing can be said at all. This last remark holds especially true when "the thing to be said" involves an interpretation or evaluation. Metaphor is indeed an indispensable instrument for interpreting experience.

Let us illustrate. In the sentence that follows, Helen Keller describes what tactile sensation means to a person who has always been blind and deaf: "The immovable rock, with its juts and warped surface, bends beneath my fingers into all manner of grooves and hollows." The rock, of course, does not literally bend; it is "immovable." But under her sensitive fingers, which do duty for eyes, the rock itself seems to respond dynamically to her touch. For what is being described is not the fumbling of an ordinary person who is blindfolded. We are, rather, being let into Helen Keller's "world," a world of exciting qualities which most of us do not know at all. Metaphor here is the only means by which it may be made known to us, since this world does not exist in our experience and cannot be pointed to; it can only be created for us.

Consider what metaphor does in the following passages. In the first passage Arthur Koestler is describing Western Europe. But he is doing more than that — he is interpreting its state of mind:

Western Europe is a patient in an iron lung. American economic and military aid provide it with oxygen, but it cannot live and breathe by itself. The sickness which paralyses it is not of an economic nature. Nor is it social strife; nor the Communist phantom creed. These are symptoms of the disease, but not its cause. The cause is both deeper and simpler: Europe has lost faith in itself.

— ARTHUR KOESTLER: *The Trail of the Dinosaur*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> From *The Trail of the Dinosaur* by Arthur Koestler. Copyright 1947, 1948, 1951, 1953, 1955 by Arthur Koestler. Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company.

Note how much work the iron-lung comparison does. The social and economic structure of Western Europe is able to function mechanically just as the polio victim's body is able to do, but the impulses have to come from without — the process is not self-sustaining. There is a paralysis of the will, so Koestler argues, that parallels the paralysis of the chest muscles of the iron-lung patient. Try to say all that this paragraph says without using Koestler's comparison, and you will begin to see how much the comparison accomplishes.

Consider a passage from a student theme, which was quoted in full on pages 184-85:

Off yonder, beyond the glitter of the water where the sun still struck, you could see the clouds piling up like a cliff, black and slate-colored, streaked with purple. I said like a cliff, but it was like a cliff that somehow, momentarily, grew taller while you looked at it, looking awfully solid but somehow swelling and coiling upward at the same time.

The comparison to a swelling and coiling cliff enables the reader to visualize what the storm cloud looked like as it boiled up. But it does more; it goes far to suggest the awe and fright that the storm cloud excited in the mind of the girl who describes it.

One more example, this one selected to combat the conventional notion that metaphor is somehow "literary." Here is the way in which "Bugs" Baer describes the collapse of a prize fighter: "Zale folded as gracefully as the Queen's fan and fell on his battered face alongside the ropes. His seconds carried him to his corner like three window-dressers packing a melted dummy off during a heat wave on the sunny side of Broadway." This description may be judged to be good writing or bad, but it is easy to see why Baer used figurative language. He was not trying to "tell" us about the scene; he was trying to make us *see* the scene, vividly, freshly, fully, as a somewhat cynical but highly interested observer might have seen it.

The nature and function of metaphor can be further illustrated from passages quoted in the earlier chapter on Description. It might be useful for the student to go back and review some of the descriptive passages there. He may well be struck with the amount of metaphor in these passages and also with the *amount of work* that the metaphors actually do. For a starter, the student might reread the description of the Arabian town on page 181, where the heat is "like a drawn sword," or the account of Mr. Chadband on page 176, a man who "moves softly and cumbrously, not unlike a bear who has been taught to walk upright," or, on page 177, Faulk-

ner's picture of Miss Emily, whose eyes are like "two small pieces of coal pressed into a lump of dough."

A few paragraphs above we cited a passage written by Helen Keller in which she gives an account of her sense of touch. We must admit that the world of Helen Keller's experience is a special world which can be conveyed to us only through suggestion and analogy. Yet, a little reflection will show us that the world of experience belonging to each of us is far more special than we may think, for our world is to a great extent determined by our values, moods, and emotional biases. The world as seen by the girl watching the storm cloud is special in this sense. If we are to communicate our experience with any accuracy, figurative language is frequently the only way by which it can be conveyed. By means of metaphor we grasp not only the experience as an entity but its "meaning," its value to us as well.

### WHAT MAKES A "GOOD" METAPHOR?

In judging the value of a metaphor, the importance of the physical similarity of the items compared is easily overestimated. In many effective comparisons the degree of physical similarity is not very great. Some element of resemblance there must be, of course. But a good comparison is not necessarily one in which there is close resemblance, since "illustration," as we have seen, is not the primary purpose of metaphor. Moreover, even a great deal of dissimilarity does not necessarily render the comparison strained or forced

#### *The element of similarity in metaphor*

To realize this last point, let us consider one of the tritest comparisons of all: "Her eyes were like stars." Far from seeming strained or overingenious, the comparison will seem to most of us entirely too simple and easy. Yet even in this well-worn analogy the objects compared are really very dissimilar. Certainly the human eyeball and the flaming mass of elements that make up the stars have very little in common. If this examination, which compares the two objects as scientifically considered, seems somewhat unfair, we can go on to point out that the eyes, even those of a lovely woman, do not much resemble the glinting points of light which are the stars as we see them. The truth of the matter is that what supports this oldest and most hackneyed of comparisons is not the physical resemblances so much as the associations: the associations of stars with brilliance, with the high and celestial. It is these associations

which make the stars seem "like" the glances of the eyes of someone loved.

Thus, every comparison has a very important subjective element in it; its proper task is to interpret, to evaluate — not to point to physical analogies. Its proper function is, as we have said, to define attitude.

Let us consider one of the celebrated comic comparisons in English literature. In his satire "Hudibras," Samuel Butler describes the rosy sky of dawn:

And like a lobster, boyl'd, the morn  
From black to red began to turn.

We think of this as an absurd comparison, and so it is — appropriately so — for "Hudibras" is a humorous poem. Yet it is worth asking why the comparison strikes us as absurd. We are likely to say that it is absurd because the dawn does not in the least resemble a boiled lobster. But the colors to be seen in the shell of a boiled lobster may very closely resemble the exact shade of red to be seen on some mornings. The absurdity does not come from the lack of physical resemblance; it comes from the absurd contrast of the small with the large, the commonplace and homely with the beautiful and grand, the grotesque creature in the steaming pot with the wide, fresh expanse of the dawn sky. Butler has, for humorous effect, deliberately played them against each other.

### *The element of contrast in metaphor*

We think of metaphors (and related figurative expressions) as "comparisons," and yet it is plain that we might as accurately refer to them as "contrasts." For the elements of dissimilarity between the terms of a metaphor may be of just as much importance as the elements of likeness. One can go further still: In an effective metaphor there must be a *considerable degree of contrast*. If we say "the river roared like a flood" or "the dog raged like a wild beast," we feel that the metaphor in each case is weak or nonexistent. A river is too much like a flood, and a dog, though a tame beast, too much resembles a wild beast. If, on the other hand, we say, "the fire roared like a flood" or "the fire raged like a wild beast," we feel that these are metaphors, even though actually rather poor metaphors. Fire and flood or fire and beast are sufficiently dissimilar for us to feel that some metaphorical transfer occurs; in these cases there are the "new namings" which constitute metaphor.

We are inclined to reject what we rather awkwardly call "far-

fetches" comparisons (The term is awkward because it suggests that the terms of a good comparison are close together, though we have seen that even "eyes" and "stars" are not really very close.) But if comparisons must not be too "far-fetched," neither must they be too nearly fetched." They have to be fetched some distance if we are to have a recognizable metaphor at all

## ■ Applications

- I The following metaphors are primarily *illustrative*, that is, the metaphor makes something plain by comparing it with a simpler or more familiar thing. But are they *merely* illustrative? Are any of the metaphors used to *state* a meaning as well as to *illustrate* a meaning? Test them on this point by trying to restate precisely "the thing said" in nonmetaphorical language

A On each side of the [bee's] abdomen are four little wax pockets situated in the joints of the hard surfaced body, and here the supply of wax may be seen issuing, the flat, light colored wax appearing somewhat like a letter which a man has tucked up under his waist coat

— CHARLES D. STEWART "The Bee's Knees"

B Intellectual assimilation takes time. The mind is not to be enriched as a coal barge is loaded. Whatever is precious in a cargo is taken carefully on board and carefully placed. Whatever is delicate and fine must be received delicately, and its place in the mind thoughtfully assigned

— ARLO BATES "Reading on the Run,"  
*Talks on the Study of Literature*

C Bed is the perfect laboratory — just the right degree of withdrawal from the world, yet with the comforts at hand, and errands delegated to someone else. The toast crumbs, accumulating among the sheets, set up the irritation inside the shell and start the pearl growing

— E. B. WHITE "Peavy, Book and Guitar"

D This man was hunting about the hotel lobby like a starved dog that has forgotten where he had buried a bone

— O. HENRY "A Municipal Report," *Strictly Business*

- II Do any of the following metaphors seem far-fetched and extravagant? Do any seem tame and flat? What principle, if any, seems to determine the matter of acceptability?

Are any of the passages ineffective because the metaphors are "mixed"? Is it possible to shift rapidly from one metaphor to another without producing confusion? Are we never to mix

metaphors? What principle, if any, seems to determine this matter?

**A** The chickens he raised were all white meat down through the drumsticks, the cows were tended like children, and the big ram he called Goliath had horns with a curl like a morning-glory vine and could butt through an iron door. But Dan'l wasn't one of your gentleman farmers; he knew all the ways of the land, and he'd be up by candlelight to see that the chores got done. A man with the mouth of a mastiff, a brow like a mountain and eyes like burning anthracite — that was Dan'l Webster in his prime.

— STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT: *The Devil and Daniel Webster*

**B** A smile lit the eyes of the expiring Kentuck. "Dying!" he repeated; "he's a-taking me with him. Tell the boys I've got the Luck with me now"; and the strong man, clinging to the frail babe as a drowning man is said to cling to a straw, drifted away into the shadowy river that flows forever to the unknown sea.

— BRET HARTE: "The Luck of Roaring Camp"

**C** Due to the great increase in the importance of social and economic problems during the past generation, philosophy is giving more attention than heretofore to the social and economic aspects of life. Also, esthetics is receiving greater consideration as the problem of civilization's goal becomes more pressing.

— JOHN GEISE: *Man and the Western World*

**D** And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water,  
That bringeth forth its fruit in its season,  
Whose leaf also doth not wither;  
And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.  
The wicked are not so,  
But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

— Psalms, 1:3-4.

**III** What is the function of each of the following metaphors? Are any of them merely decorative? What does each metaphor "say"? Try to restate in nonmetaphorical language the exact shade of meaning that each conveys.

**A** The furnished room received its latest guest with a first glow of pseudo-hospitality, a hectic, haggard, perfunctory welcome like the specious smile of a demirep.

— O. HENRY: "The Furnished Room," *Strictly Business*

**B** A late moon had cut a round, white hole in the sky off to the east, shedding enough light so that down below I could see the thin smoke-like scattered clouds floating halfway between me and the chromium-plated highway of the Potomac.

— BEIRNE LAY, JR.: *I Wanted Wings*



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**C** Her bones felt loose, and floated around in her skin, and Doctor Harry floated like a balloon around the foot of the bed. He floated and pulled down his waistcoat and swung his glasses on a cord.

— KATHERINE ANNE PORTER: "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall"

Material for further exercises on metaphor may be found in Applications at the end of Chapter 7, pages 187-89.

## Chapter Twelve

### Tone and Other Aspects of Style

#### TONE AS THE EXPRESSION OF ATTITUDE

Every piece of discourse implies a particular situation. A politician is attempting to convince a hostile audience; or a mother is attempting to coax a child into doing something which the child dislikes; or a legislator who can assume agreement on ends is trying to persuade his colleagues that certain procedures constitute the best means by which to secure these ends. Even technical treatises, which attempt no persuasion, imply a special situation; the writer assumes that he is writing for people whose interest in the truth is so absorbing that rhetorical persuasions would be unnecessary and even positively irritating.

Just as every discourse implies a situation in which the writer is related to his audience, so every discourse also implies a certain *tone*. This term "tone" is based frankly on a metaphor. We all know how important in speech the tone of voice may be in indicating the precise meaning of the words. For instance, the words "very well," uttered in a certain tone of voice, may imply enthusiastic agreement, but spoken in another tone of voice they may indicate nothing more than surly compliance. The "tone" of a piece of writing, in the same way, may show the writer's attitude, and in so doing may heavily qualify the literal meaning of the words.

The importance of tone is easily illustrated by the misunderstandings which personal letters so often provoke. In conversation, even a rather clumsy and inadequate knowledge of language can be so supplemented by the actual tone of the voice that little serious misunderstanding will occur. But when such a speaker writes a letter — where, of course, the "tone of voice" has to be implied by the words

themselves — all sorts of misunderstandings can, and frequently do, occur. The practiced writer, on the other hand, is able even in this medium to control what we have called the "tone."

All through this book we have been dealing with the problem of tone, although we have rarely used the word. For example, when, in the chapter on Argument (page 162), we talked about the occasion of an argument and the right way to present it, we were concerned with the problem of tone. In the chapter on Diction (page 263), we touched upon the problem of tone when we discussed the associations of words and the way in which certain words are colored by our attitude — the word *cop* used to refer to a police officer, or *rube* used to refer to a farmer. Again, we saw in the chapter on Metaphor (page 275) the ways in which comparisons — "He's a good egg," "She's a peach" — express our attitudes. All such devices represent means for controlling tone. But tone is more than these devices; it is a pervasive thing which characterizes the whole composition, and it is a matter so important in its own right that it deserves special discussion.

### *The importance of tone*

In most of our writing an important part of what we are trying to "communicate" is our attitude itself. This is certainly true of poetry and fiction, but it is also true of most essays, sermons, orations, and letters. It is even true of much of what we are inclined to regard as pure exposition. For even in expository writing the author is rarely content to give us mere facts, or mere propositions. He feels that to do this is to be painfully and technically "dry."

If we turn back to Bertrand Russell's paragraph on "scientific seeing" (page 281), we find a lively discussion couched in informal language of a subject that could have been dry and technical. Russell wants to encourage his reader to understand what he is explaining, rather than frighten him away with specialized scientific language. While he finds certain unfamiliar words and phrases unavoidable (*causal connection*, *compendious*, *traversing*), he tries to establish at the opening and maintain throughout the piece a familiar tone which will put the reader at ease — Mr. Jones walking along the street, thinking about his dinner or the umbrella he has lost.

### *Attitude toward subject*

We are well acquainted, however, with subjects which scarcely permit informality of tone, even when being presented to intimates. To take an extreme case, here is a quotation from a sermon by the great seventeenth-century preacher John Donne:

Make haste to have these spiritual graces; to desire them is to begin to have them: But make not too much haste in the way. Do not think thy self purer than thou art because thou seest another do some such sins as thou hast forborne.

Beloved, at last, when Christ Jesus comes with his scales, thou shalt not be weighed with that man, but every man shall be weighed with God: *Be pure as your Father in heaven is pure*, is the weight that must try us all; and then, the purest of us all that trusts to his own purity must hear that fearful *Mene Tekel Upharsin*, Thou art weighed, thou art found too light. . . .

Donne addresses his congregation intimately and directly. He even calls them "beloved," but no matter how close a relation the preacher has with his congregation, the urgency of the subject forbids informality. He may, it is true, use simple and realistic language, but the seriousness of the subject pervades his language.

This is not to say, however, that humor or wit is not possible about serious subjects, even about death itself. When, in an old anecdote, the condemned man is being led out to the gallows in the cold dawn and asks for a handkerchief to put around his neck to keep from catching cold, we are not offended by the levity — we laugh. When Mercutio, in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, makes a joke about his death wound and says that it is "not so deep as a well nor so wide as a church door: but 'tis enough, 'twill serve," we aren't offended. For one thing, both the condemned man and Mercutio are making light of their own distress, and we too feel a sense of release with them. Humor can work, and often does work, in both literature and life as a way of rising above distress, an antidote for self-pity. Humor thus employed works as a kind of understatement, undercutting the expected note of seriousness.

But we must remember that humor about a serious subject always requires tact and discrimination. The writer may understand this need for tact and discrimination if he thinks of the occasion of his writing as analogous to a social situation. What kind of reader can he assume? One who can respond to the humor or one who will be shocked by it? But perhaps the writer wants to shock. Then he should ask himself whether he wants to shock just to show off, or whether the shock is to make a point, to bring some new awareness.

And always we can recognize that there are certain situations where levity can only be offensive and, worse, silly. To take a most extreme instance, it is hard to imagine a person who would show levity in discussing the Passion of Christ. Blasphemy would be, in a sense, comprehensible, for, in a backhand way, blasphemy always recognizes the seriousness of the thing blasphemed. It is like an inverted prayer, we might say. But levity here would be comprehensible only as an indication of a vain, silly, and unimaginative person.

If we turn from serious to light subjects, the same general principles apply. The light subject requires light treatment, not deadpan solemnity — unless, of course, that solemnity is indeed part of the joke. To look ahead, observe the serious, almost mock-heroic elements in the passage from "Farewell, My Lovely," Lee Strout White's essay on the Model T Ford (page 296). In this discussion we have concerned ourselves with two extremes: seriousness and levity. Needless to say, there are hundreds of shadings between these extremes. The possible variations of tone are almost infinite.

### *Attitude toward the audience*

Until now we have, for the most part, emphasized tone as indicating the writer's attitude toward his subject, or the attitude which the subject might elicit from the writer. But the writer's attitude toward the audience is equally important. It is so important that, as we can see by the previous section, one can scarcely talk about the attitude toward the subject without drifting over into a discussion of the audience.

Let us suppose that we are writing in support of the American policy toward Red China. The subject itself would, of course, allow certain different kinds of tone. We know that there is no merely mechanical equation between subject and tone. But the subject is a serious one, and though humor and satire might enter, flippancy could not. The demands of the subject would, however, be only the beginning of the study of tone. The treatment for a friendly audience, one that assumed the basic policy to be correct and that merely wanted further clarification, would scarcely be adequate for a hostile audience. We might want to persuade the hostile audience and lead them bit by bit to agreement. We might want to find the common ground (page 104) and try to show that once they recognize it, they will have to follow, step by logical step, to the present policy. We might want to shock them into an awareness of the necessity of the present policy. We might, in fact, try any number of approaches, and each approach, or combination of approaches, would imply a

different tone. And each possible tone would, of course, be different from the merely explanatory tone taken toward the friendly audience.

Furthermore, considerations of friendliness and hostility are not the only ones that determine the writer's attitude toward his audience. The knowledge which a special audience possesses and its interests and concerns are also determining factors. Suppose that we are writing about China. It will make a difference if our essay is to appear in a technical journal edited for specialists in political science; or in *Fortune* magazine edited for prosperous businessmen; or on a newspaper editorial page; or in *Harper's* magazine. It will make a difference if we read our paper before a college forum, or a California audience with its keen awareness of the Orient, or a Midwestern Chamber of Commerce dinner. The same tone would not serve for all. What is good for everything is not very good for anything.

The advertising page will furnish another kind of example of the way in which a writer's attitude toward his audience determines tone. Advertising puts a special premium upon catching and holding the interest of the reader. The advertising copy writer who did not understand some of the elementary principles of the control of tone would soon be on his way to the nearest government unemployment insurance office.

Here is an advertisement that depicts a young woman on a luxurious bed looking dreamily at a handsome blanket. The caption begins: "For you to whom beauty is a necessity. . . . Yours is a nature that thrives on beauty. . . . Seize it as a vital factor in your daily living. To you a blanket should be more than a source of warmth. Exquisite colors, luxuriously deep nap, rich, virgin-wool loveliness — these awaken in you an emotional response far beyond the material."

These statements, of course, are not addressed merely to the young woman pictured in the advertisement. They are addressed to the reader as well, and they make certain flattering assumptions about the reader: that she is a young woman of means who is at home with the luxurious and who has a soul which deserves and requires beauty as a necessity. Coarser natures may buy blankets simply for warmth, but you, dear and lovely reader, ought to have something more — even in a blanket.

## ■ Applications

- I Select five advertisements from current magazines and state what is the primary basis of the appeal made to the reader. What attitude is taken toward the reader? What statements or devices in the advertisement suggest this attitude?
- II Reread the student theme "Teachers I Have Known" (page 64) and imagine that you are writing it for a teacher who you think probably knows something about his subject but who is quite dull in the classroom. Perhaps you might turn in this draft to him as it stands. Perhaps it will not hurt his feelings, or the hurt may actually be good for him. But with him in mind, could you render this theme more persuasive? Try re-writing some sections of it, particularly paragraphs 3 and 4, to see whether you can improve the tone as directed toward the special reader we have described.

## TONE AS A QUALIFICATION OF MEANING

We began our discussion of tone with special emphasis upon tone as a reflection of the author's attitude — his specification as to how we are to "take" what he is saying. But it should be apparent by now that tone also represents a qualification of meaning — a shaping of what is to be said. Indeed, a little reflection will show that full meaning is rarely conveyed by merely literal statement. We constantly find that we must "read between the lines" in order to understand a letter; or that we must take into account the tone of voice and the facial expression if we are to understand fully a conversation with a friend. The importance of tone as a guide to meaning comes out particularly in essays that deal with our valuations and judgments.

For example, consider how important is the tone in the following passage describing the old Model T Ford:

I see by the new Sears Roebuck catalogue that it is still possible to buy an axle for a 1909 Model T Ford, but I am not deceived. The great days have faded, the end is in sight. Only one page in the current catalogue is devoted to parts and accessories for the Model T; yet everyone remembers springtimes when the Ford gadget section was larger than men's clothing, almost as large as household furnishings. The last Model T was built in 1927, and the car is fading from what scholars call the American scene — which is an understatement, because to a few million people who grew up with it, the old Ford practically *was* the American scene.

It was the miracle God had wrought And it was patently the sort of thing that could only happen once Mechanically uncanny it was like nothing that had ever come to the world before Flourishing industries rose and fell with it As a vehicle, it was hard working commonplace, heroic, and it often seemed to transmit those qualities to the persons who rode in it My own generation identifies it with Youth, with its gaudy irretrievable excitements before it fades into the mist, I would like to pay it the tribute of the sigh that is not a sob and set down random entries in a shape somewhat less cumbersome than a Sears Roebuck catalogue

The Model T was distinguished from all other makes of cars by the fact that its transmission was of a type known as planetary — which was half metaphysics half sheer friction Engineers accepted the word "planetary" in its epicyclic sense but I was always conscious that it also means 'wandering,' 'erratic' Because of the peculiar nature of this planetary element, there was always, in Model T, a certain dull rapport between engine and wheels, and, even when the car was in a state known as neutral it trembled with a deep imperative and tended to inch forward There was never a moment when the bands were not faintly egging the machine on In this respect it was like a horse, rolling the bit on its tongue, and country people brought to it the same technique they used with draft animals

— LEE STROUT WHITE "Farewell, My Lovely"<sup>1</sup>

To enjoy the passage just quoted one must be aware that the author laments the passing of the Model T with mock seriousness The game that the author plays is to wreath literary allusions and sentimental clichés about a piece of machinery which seems to belong to a nonliterary and nonsentimental world Suppose we remove the tone of mock lament and simply state the facts literally and directly. Here is what we might have if we treated the first paragraph in this fashion.

The new Sears Roebuck catalogue indicates that one may still purchase an axle for a 1909 Model T Ford But this possibility, though interesting, does not mean that the Model T Ford is any longer an important factor in American transportation The section of the catalogue devoted to Ford parts, once larger than that devoted to men's clothing, has now shrunk to a single page No Model T's have been built since 1927, and this model is rapidly disappearing from the American highway

The rewriting, by altering the tone, destroys the humor It does even more It destroys a good deal of what the passage says For the real content of the passage is the presentation of a certain complex

<sup>1</sup> From "Farewell, My Lovely" by Lee Strout White Copyright 1936 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc (formerly The I-R Publishing Corporation)



attitude toward some aspects of American life. The author's real concern is with American social history, but he presents that history, not clinically and "sociologically," but affectionately and a little whimsically. The tone, then, is a most important element in "what" the author is saying. Lest the last example be thought a rather special case, consider the importance of tone in the following definition of a weed.

What is a weed? I have heard it said that there are sixty definitions. For me, a weed is a plant out of place. Or, less tolerantly, call it a foreign aggressor, which is a thing not so mild as a mere escape from cultivation, a visitor that sows itself innocently in a garden bed where you would not choose to plant it. Most weeds have natal countries, whence they have sortied. So Japanese honeysuckle, English plantain, Russian thistle came from lands we recognize, but others, like gypsies, have lost all record of their geographic origin. Some of them turn up in all countries, and are listed in no flora as natives. Some knock about the seaports of the world, springing up wherever ballast used to be dumped from the old sailing ships. Others prefer cities; they have lost contact with sweet soil, and lead a guttersnipe existence. A little group occurs only where wool waste is dumped, others are dooryard and pavement weeds, seeming to thrive the more as they are trod by the feet of man's generations. Some prized in an age of simpler tastes have become garden *declasses* and street urchins, thus it comes about that the pleasant but plebeian scent of Bouncing Bet, that somewhat blowsy pink of old English gardens, is now one of the characteristic odors of American sidewalk ends, where the pavement peters out and shacks and junked cars begin.

— DONALD CULROSS PEATTIE *Flowering Earth*<sup>2</sup>

We could describe a weed as follows.

A weed may be defined as a plant that, though growing in cultivated ground, is economically useless and is a detriment to the crop being cultivated. Yet, it must be conceded that this definition is somewhat subjective, for a plant considered useless by one person might be counted useful by another, and a plant ordinarily cultivated for its own sake might be regarded as a nuisance when found in a field planted to some other crop. But there is general agreement on most of the plants that we call weeds. Some examples would be dog fennel, dock, mullein, and ragweed.

This paragraph gives substantially the same definition as that given in the paragraph by Peattie. But it is relatively toneless. The author is not visualizing any particular person for whom he is writing, and

<sup>2</sup> From *Flowering Earth* by Donald Culross Peattie. Copyright 1939, by Donald Culross Peattie. Courtesy of G. P. Putnam's Sons.

he does not seem to have a particular attitude toward his subject. As a consequence, this paragraph is quite without personality.

Notice how much of the writer's personality comes through in the original passage. Peattie evidently possesses a great deal of botanical information. But the passage in question is not intended as technical description; rather it is a more desultory and amiable account of weeds. Peattie is a man of perception, with keen senses ("the pleasant but plebeian scent of Bouncing Bet," "the characteristic odors of American sidewalk ends"). He evidently has a sense of humor. He is aware of current politics ("foreign aggressor"). He has a sense of history.

Notice, too, how the diction unobtrusively but powerfully supports the variations of the basic metaphor. "Foreign aggressor" is pointed up by the use of the word "sortied." (A "sortie" suggests a military raid.) "Guttersnipe existence" sharpens the hint given by "others prefer cities." "Plebeian" and "somewhat blowsy" support and extend the suggestions made by "*déclassé*."

The diction, of course, does something more. Though Peattie is willing to use a technical term like *flora*, most of his words are specific and concrete. Moreover, he does not hesitate to use colloquial expressions like "knock about" and "peters out." Peattie is not at all like the fabled scholar who knew all the pedantic terms but could not address a dog in his own dialect. His diction is accommodated to the wholesome vulgarity of his subject. Peattie's paragraph illustrates the fact that a particular tone depends upon various factors — diction, metaphor, as well as the larger principles of composition. Tone, indeed, represents a kind of final integration of all the elements that go into a piece of writing. Writing that is toneless or confused in tone is usually bad writing.

## ■ Applications

- 1 In the following description we get an impression of Jidda. It possesses a definite quality, a special atmosphere. What is the author's attitude toward this city? Does he loathe it? Admire it? Feel affection for it? Is his writing florid? Studiedly dry? What is the tone?

The style of architecture was like crazy Elizabethan half-timber work, in the elaborate Cheshire fashion, but gone gimcrack to an incredible degree. House-fronts were fretted, pierced and pargetted till they looked as though cut out of cardboard for a romantic stage-setting. Every story jutted, every window leaned one way or other;

often the very walls sloped. It was like a dead city, so clean under foot and so quiet. Its winding, even streets were floored with damp sand solidified by time and as silent to the tread as any carpet. The lattices and wall returns deadened all reverberation of voice. There were no carts, nor any streets wide enough for carts, no shod animals, no bustle anywhere. Everything was hushed, strained, even furtive. The doors of houses shut softly as we passed. There were no loud dogs, no crying children, indeed, except in the bazaar, still half asleep, there were few wayfarers of any kind, and the rare people we did meet, all thin, and as it were wasted by disease, with scarred, hairless faces and screwed-up eyes, slipped past us quickly and cautiously, not looking at us. Their skimp, white robes, shaven polls with little skull caps, red cotton shoulder shawls, and bare feet were so same as to be almost a uniform.

The atmosphere was oppressive, deadly. There seemed no life in it. It was not burning hot, but held a moisture and sense of great age and exhaustion such as seemed to belong to no other place, not a passion of smells like Smyrna, Naples or Marseilles, but a feeling of long use, of the exhalations of many people, of continued bath heat and sweat. One would say that for years Jidda had not been swept through by a firm breeze, that its streets kept their air from year's end to year's end, from the day they were built for so long as the houses should endure.

— T. E. LAWRENCE *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* <sup>3</sup>

- II For what audience is the following paragraph written? Has the audience been visualized by the writer? Could it be said that the writing is relatively "toneless"? If so, is its tonelessness a defect or a virtue?

Before intelligent criteria can be developed for the selection of superimposed leaders, the organization, through its professional staff, must first clearly define the objectives of its group program and establish qualifications for group leadership. Second, these objectives must be made clear to the leaders. In group work terminology the concept *socialization* appears as the central objective, but in the experience of the writer little effort has been made to define this concept so as to be understandable to the leader.

— From a magazine of social research

### *Literal statement and ironical statement*

Irony always involves a discrepancy between the literal meaning of a statement and its actual meaning. On the surface, the ironical

<sup>3</sup> From *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* by T. E. Lawrence. Copyright 1925, 1935 by Doubleday & Company, Inc.

statement says one thing; in actuality it says something rather different. In the lighthearted, laughingly ironical statement, the literal meaning may be only partially qualified; in a bitter and obvious irony (such as that which we call sarcasm) the literal meaning may be entirely reversed. An example of rather lighthearted and affectionate irony occurs in the discussion of the Model T Ford by Lee Strout White (see page 296). The little car is treated in almost mock heroic style ("It was the miracle God had wrought. . . . it was patently the sort of thing that could only happen once. . . before it fades into the mist, I would like to pay it the tribute of the sigh that is not a sob. . . ."). The informal essay frequently makes use of some form of gentle irony such as this.

A sample of ordinary sarcasm might be represented by a student's outburst at his roommate: "A fine friend you turn out to be, borrowing my car and taking my girl on a date." The literal meaning which proclaims the roommate to be a fine young man is just the opposite of what his now irate friend means to say about him.

Between the more delicate ironical qualifications and the sarcastic reversal there are a thousand shadings possible, and it is a pity that we do not have specific terms by which to describe them. Yet, on second thought, our lack of such terms may be no real handicap. We can develop these qualifications of meaning without in the least needing to give them a label. What is important is not that we have a glossary of terms, but that we be aware of the fact of ironical qualification. Here are two samples of ironical statement. The first is from a novel, Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*:

Being an invalid, Joseph Sedley contented himself with a bottle of claret, besides his Madeira at dinner, and he managed a couple of plates full of strawberries and cream, and twenty-four little rout cakes, that were lying neglected in a plate near him, and certainly (for novelists have the privilege of knowing everything), he thought a great deal about the girl upstairs. "A nice, gay, merry young creature," thought he to himself. "How she looked at me when I picked up her handkerchief at dinner! She dropped it twice. Who's that singing in the drawing-room? Gad! shall I go up and see?"

This is rather obvious irony, but certainly not severely sarcastic. Thackeray tells us a good deal about Joseph Sedley's state of invalidism by describing his diet. But the joke is not so simple as this: Thackeray suggests something of Sedley's general character, and more economically than he might have done by giving a fully explicit description.

The second example is from *The Exurbanites*. Exurbia (from

Latin *ex urbe*, meaning outside the city) is the name that the author assigns to those districts beyond the suburbs of New York City in which many people connected with the communications and entertainment industries live.

How do they spend their money?

Well, variously. In some cases, even as you and I. Being exurbanites, they hustle in to town, to see the latest play, or to hear the latest concert. They deal heavily in the metropolitan specialty shops and department stores: they average better than six charge accounts per family. There are bookstores, in this exurb, and these folk are highly literate: they buy books, some of which they may place in prominent positions on their coffee tables. They buy paintings, sometimes as investments; if they conceive it to be important to achieve status as hi-fi buffs, they buy expensive and intricate equipment, and subsequently records. (Standard classics, yes; plus some modern and off-beat classical types like Poulenc; Friml, no. Show tunes by Porter, Coward, etc., yes; Victor Herbert, no. Jazz, yes — if it's authentic; Liberace, no. And, importantly, a heavy play to off-color records, those for example, dubbed off the master on which the recording artist fluffed and in consequence, exchanged blue epithets with the boys in the band.)

— A. C. SPECTORSKY: *The Exurbanites*

The irony expressed in this passage is primarily an *irony of situation*; that is, the people described pretend to be interested in literature and music but are really concerned only with giving the impression of being highbrow. But this irony of situation is at least partially converted into an *irony of statement* by the way in which the writer describes the situation. It is as though he did not himself see the implications of such phrases as "sometimes as investments," "if they conceive it to be important to achieve status," and so on. The writer's refusal to make comments upon what he is depicting — his affecting not to see the implications of what he is describing — in itself constitutes irony.

### ■ Applications

- 1 The scene described below is a British club in India, some decades ago. The orchestra has just played "God Save the King." What is the author's attitude toward his fellow countrymen? The passage is obviously ironic, but what is the precise shading of irony? Is the author indignant? Mocking? Bitter? Or what?

Meanwhile the performance ended, and the amateur orchestra played the National Anthem Conversation and billiards stopped, faces stiffened It was the Anthem of the Army of Occupation It reminded every member of the club that he or she was British and in exile It produced a little sentiment and a useful accession of will power The meager tune the curt series of demands on Jehovah, fused into a prayer unknown in England, and though they perceived neither Royalty nor Deity they did perceive something, they were strengthened to resist another day They poured out, offering one another drinks

— E M FORSTLER *A Passage to India*

## II Here is a piece of advice on how to go about social climbing

Even Emily Post offers a few demure suggestions to the "outsider" "The better, and the only way if she [a woman with social ambition] has not the key of birth is through study to make herself eligible Meanwhile, charitable or civic work will give her interest and occupation as well as throw her with ladies of good breeding, by association with whom she cannot fail to acquire some of those qualities before which the gates of society always open The patronage of charity church settlement work (Episcopalian), the financial support of hospitals clinics, and opera are probably the safest route which the newcomer can travel. After she has given her cheque for a substantial sum and shown her eagerness to work for the cause, she will be asked to become a sustaining member and sit on the board with women she has wanted to know Probably they will begin to ask her to tea, then to large parties and luncheons and finally to dinner If fortune has blessed her with a small daughter let her be sent to a fashionable day school where she will have classmates to be invited to a birthday party, and given expensive souvenirs, in this way a little child may lead them No climber should overlook the broadening influences of travel, in crossing the Atlantic, cruising the Mediterranean, or circumnavigating the globe, one may get a good table by generous tipping and promptness, and then maneuver eligible acquaintances and celebrities into sitting there Deck stewards also can do much for one, since during the course of a long voyage propinquity is almost irresistible

— DIXON WECTER *The Saga of American Society*<sup>4</sup>

What is the quality of the irony employed in this passage? Define it as precisely as you can. What are some of the ironical devices employed?

<sup>4</sup> From *The Saga of American Society* by Dixon Wecter Copyright 1937, by Charles Scribner's Sons.

- III The student theme "Teachers I Have Known" (page 64) has some traces of irony in it. For example, the student asks: "Did they become teachers because they were really interested in their subject and in young people, or did they just drift into the profession through indifference or necessity?" But in general, the judgments are given directly and explicitly. Would there be any advantages in presenting the judgment against such teachers indirectly and ironically? Try rewriting this theme, making use of an ironical approach. Pretend, for example, that you are praising all teachers; or try to give a deadpan account of the teachers' faults as if you did not realize that they were faults.

### *Overstatement and understatement*

We have been occupied with a distinction between a literal and nonliteral (including the ironic) use of words. It is useful to consider the problem of tone in the light of another distinction, that between *overstatement* and *understatement*. Overstatement, as the term implies, is redundancy; but it is much more than mere repetition. The term connotes gushiness and floweriness — a straining after effects. The following passage consists of the last two paragraphs of Bret Harte's story, "The Outcasts of Poker Flat." In the story a gambler and a prostitute rise to heroism as they try to shelter and protect an innocent girl who has fallen into their company when the whole party is overtaken by a severe snowstorm in the mountains. The paragraphs that follow describe the last days of the two women, the innocent girl and the prostitute.

The wind lulled as if it feared to waken them. Feathery drifts of snow, shaken from the long pine boughs, flew like white-winged birds, and settled about them as they slept. The moon through the rifted clouds looked down upon what had been the camp. But all human stain, all trace of earthly travail, was hidden beneath the spotless mantle mercifully flung from above.

They slept all day that day and the next, nor did they waken when voices and footsteps broke the silence of the camp. And when pitying fingers brushed the snow from their wan faces, you could scarcely have told from the equal peace that dwelt upon them which was she that had sinned.

Here the author, in his anxiety to stress the pathos of the scene and the redemption of the fallen woman, is not content to let the scene speak for itself. The wind lulls the two women; the moon looks down upon them; a "spotless mantle" is "mercifully flung

from above." The pseudopoetic language, the suggestion that nature mercifully hides "all human stain," the general absence of restraint and reserve — all indicate that the tone here is one of *sentimentality*; that is, emotion in excess of the occasion.

What was Bret Harte's own attitude? One has to conclude that either he himself was "soft" (that is, that he was taken in by his own attempt to "work up" an effect), or else he was cynically trying to seduce his reader into an emotional response which is not itself justified by the dramatic occasion that he provided. Whatever Harte's attitude, most readers will feel that the tone is sentimental. Sentimentality usually betrays itself by a straining to work up the reader's feelings. Of course, in a sense, any appeal to our emotions represents an attempt "to work up" an effect. But it is one thing to do this legitimately by presenting a scene with imaginative power, and it is quite a different thing to try to bully the reader into the desired emotional response. Readers may disagree on whether the response has been evoked legitimately or illegitimately (that is, sentimentally), but the principle involved is crucial. Otherwise any writer, however tawdry or mawkish, could demand our response simply by making a direct assault on our feelings.

The student may feel that in the kind of writing that he does there is little danger of his "gushing"; and it is quite true that the particular temptations to which Bret Harte yielded are not likely to tempt him. But student themes present their own opportunities for overwriting. The theme in which a student tries to describe his grandfather and his mother (page 75) can be used to illustrate this problem. A few phrases like "the dearest Mom in all the world" would alter the effect much for the worse. The student's affection for his mother comes out quite clearly, but he lets us infer it from the way in which he writes about her.

We must not, however, associate overwriting merely with the softer emotions of love and pity. It can show itself in a strained attempt at humor or a hectic gaiety or a pretentious heartiness. Advertising copy will provide obvious instances (see page 295).

Understatement does not constitute a true antithesis to overstatement. Though overstatement, as it is commonly used, is a term of adverse criticism, understatement is not. It does not necessarily mean statement that is starved and deficient, poor because of its meagerness. Instead it tends to mean statement of a calculated bareness or a studied dryness. Indeed, understatement is often a powerful device for obtaining certain effects. One may illustrate by a passage from *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* in which T. E. Lawrence describes an incident that occurred in Arabia during World War I



while he was serving with the Arabs in their revolt against Turkey. The incident took place while Lawrence was leading a raiding party of Arab tribesmen.

My followers had been quarrelling all day, and while I was lying near the rocks a shot was fired. I paid no attention; for there were hares and birds in the valley; but a little while later Suleiman roused me and made me follow him across the valley to an opposite bay in the rocks, where one of the Ageyl, a Borcida man, was lying stone dead with a bullet through his temples. The shot must have been fired from close by; because the skin was burnt about one wound. The remaining Ageyl were running frantically about; and when I asked what it was, Ali, their head man, said that Hamed the Moor had done the murder. I suspected Suleiman, because of the feud between the Atban and Ageyl . . . but Ali assured me that Suleiman had been with him three hundred yards further up the valley gathering sticks when the shot was fired. I sent all out to search for Hamed, and crawled back to the baggage, feeling that it need not have happened this day of all days when I was in pain.

As I lay there I heard a rustle, and opened my eyes slowly upon Hamed's back as he stooped over his saddle-bags, which lay just beyond my rock. I covered him with a pistol and then spoke. He had put down his rifle to lift the gear; and was at my mercy till the others came. We held a court at once; and after a while Hamed confessed that, he and Salem having had words, he had seen red and shot him suddenly. Our inquiry ended. The Ageyl, as relatives of the dead man, demanded blood for blood. The others supported them; and I tried vainly to talk the gentle Ali round. My head was aching with fever and I could not think; but hardly even in health, with all eloquence, could I have begged Hamed off; for Salem had been a friendly fellow and his sudden murder a wanton crime.

Then rose up the horror which would make civilized man shun justice like a plague if he had not the need to serve him as hangmen for wages. There were other Moroccans in our army; [Hamed the Moor was a Moroccan] and to let the Ageyl kill one in feud meant reprisals by which our unity would have been endangered. It must be a formal execution, and at last, desperately, I told Hamed that he must die for punishment, and laid the burden of his killing on myself. Perhaps they would count me not qualified for feud. At least no revenge could lie against my followers; for I was a stranger and kinless.

I made him enter a narrow gully of the spur, a dank twilight place overgrown with weeds. Its sandy bed had been pitted by trickles of water down the cliffs in the late rain. At the end it shrank to a crack a few inches wide. The walls were vertical. I stood in the entrance and gave him a few moments' delay which he spent crying on the ground. Then I made him rise and shot him through the chest. He fell down on the weeds shrieking, with the blood coming out in spurts

over his clothes, and jerked about till he rolled nearly to where I was. I fired again, but was shaking so that I only broke his wrist. He went on calling out, less loudly, now lying on his back with his feet towards me, and I leant forward and shot him for the last time in the thick of his neck under the jaw. His body shivered a little, and I called the Ageyl; who buried him in the gully where he was. Afterwards the wakeful night dragged over me, till, hours before dawn, I had the men up and made them load, in my longing to be set free of Wadi Kitan. They had to lift me into the saddle.

— T. E. LAWRENCE: *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* <sup>5</sup>

What is Lawrence's attitude toward Hamed? Toward the Arabs and their blood feuds? Most of all, toward himself? Is he ashamed of himself? Proud of himself? Complacent and untroubled about himself?

The incident is told with detachment and an almost studied dryness. But it is evident that Lawrence is not glossing over the incident casually and briefly. He develops it fully, giving us even minute details: e.g., "bullet through his temples," "as he stooped over his saddle-bags," "shot him for the last time in the thick of his neck under the jaw." Even the scene of the execution, the gully, is described carefully and precisely: "Its sandy bed had been pitted by trickles of water down the cliffs in the late rain."

The narrator evidently remembers the whole incident vividly, and knows how to make the incident vivid to his reader. Why, then, is he not more explicit about his own feelings and attitudes? Would anything have been gained if Lawrence had added a long paragraph describing the feelings that passed through his mind as he decided that he must act as executioner? Would anything have been lost? Notice that Lawrence is willing to use the word "horror," but he does not write, "As a civilized man I was overwhelmed with horror," but rather, "Then rose up the horror which would make civilized man shun justice like a plague if he had not the needy to serve him as hangmen for wages." Why does Lawrence, in this most explicit account of his own feelings, prefer the generalized statement?

A little meditation on these questions is likely to result in some such conclusion as this: that Lawrence, far from remaining cool and detached, was indeed terribly shaken by the experience, but that, nevertheless, he preferred to make his *account* of the experience as detached and objective as was possible. He chose to give a restrained description of his actions, leaving his reader to infer from the actions themselves what his feelings must have been.

<sup>5</sup> From *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* by T. E. Lawrence. Copyright 1925, 1935 by Doubleday & Company, Inc.

This restraint itself has an important effect on the tone: it implies a certain modesty (his own mental anguish is not allowed to dominate the story as if he thought his anguish the important thing in the episode) and it implies a certain confidence in the reader's maturity and sensitiveness — the reader need not be "told" what Lawrence was feeling. But the restraint here is of still further importance; the restraint manifested in Lawrence's *account* of his action is a reflection of, and a type of, the disciplined control which he imposed on his followers and on himself in the desert. The man who relates the action is the man who acted, and his manner of writing about the event suggests his attitude toward the event itself.

This discussion of understatement and restraint should not prevent the student from writing on occasion as vividly as he can about exciting experiences. But first things should come first, and underplaying certain aspects of a composition may be a necessary way of putting certain other aspects into proper focus. Understatement is, among other things, a means of bringing about a proper proportioning of the various elements of the composition.

### *Some practical don't's*

The problem of tone, then, is most important. There are obviously too many shadings of tone for us to be able to set down elaborate rules for achieving the proper tone. But it is possible to set down a few "don't's" which have a very general application.

(1) Writing down. One must not "write down" to his audience. The sense of oversimple statement and painfully careful explanation can disgust the reader as quickly as any offense of which the writer is capable. Prose which is properly suited to an audience of eight-year-olds would prove completely tiresome or, on the other hand, unintentionally funny, to a mature audience. Take into account your reader's lack of special knowledge of your subject, but never underestimate your reader's intelligence.

(2) False enthusiasm. The reader is also likely to resent any hint of synthetic breeziness and false camaraderie. It is a fault into which modern advertising is tending to press the whole civilization. Bug-eyed young matrons oo-la-la-ing over the purchase of sheets or tooth-brushes, and the all-too-infectious joviality of supersalesmen more and more fill the advertisements. The student obviously wishes to gain a kind of liveliness and warmth in his style, but an artificial concoction of informality and sprightliness can be more depressing than a rather painful dryness.

(3) Sentimentality. This third fault is hardly likely to appear in most simple expository writing, but as we have seen in earlier chap-

ters, there is very little writing which is "simply expository." Sentimentality may show itself as pure gushiness or as a kind of hair-trigger emotional sensitiveness. But whatever form it takes, sentimentality always involves an implied demand on the part of the writer for more emotional response than the situation warrants; and it implies, on the part of the sentimental reader, a willingness to respond emotionally when the response is not actually justified.

## THE SPECIAL AUDIENCE AND THE IDEAL AUDIENCE

Earlier in this chapter we spoke of tone as reflecting the author's attitude toward his audience *and* toward his material, but the student may well ask: "When should attitude toward the audience dominate, and when attitude toward the material?"

Writing which demands that the author take into account his particular audience is, as we have seen, always "practical" writing — writing designed to effect some definite purpose. The advertiser is trying to persuade the housewife to buy something. The politician hopes that his speech will induce citizens to vote for him. Or, to take a more exalted case (for there need be no self-interest), a statesman urges a nation (through his writing and his speeches) to adopt a certain course of action. Yet these cases all have one thing in common: they are designed to secure a practical end. An audience is to be won to agreement or urged to action.

If such writing is to be effective, the author must, of course, keep his specific audience constantly in mind. An approach calculated to win the suffrage of one audience may very well repel another. The age, the intelligence, the amount of education, the interests, the habits and prejudices of the audience, must all be taken into account. The skillful management of such problems is an aspect of rhetoric, and for many people rhetoric has come to mean largely the art of persuasion. The pure scientist may be thought to escape the need for using rhetoric. The scientist writing strictly as a scientist does not persuade his reader, he "just tells him." The facts speak for themselves, and in purely technical writing they are allowed to speak for themselves. But they speak fully only to a specially trained audience.

But what about the student who has no special audience in view? Addressing himself to a general rather than a specific reader, he may find that the problem of tone becomes difficult simply because he lacks a definite target at which to aim. Yet all good writing is addressed to a reader, even though that reader is an ideal reader, not a limited and special one. One could argue, in fact, that because

the ideal reader is ideal, his intelligence, his sensitivity, his general discrimination, are to be honored and respected all the more. This is to say what has been said earlier — that we do not evade the problem of tone by addressing ourselves to the reader-in-general rather than to Tom, Dick, or Harry. Actually, the problem of tone here becomes more important, not less important.

Yet the student, even though he agrees with what has just been argued, may find that the ideal reader remains too shadowy to furnish him something definite at which to aim. In that case it may be useful for him to imagine himself writing for some particular person — the most intelligent and discriminating person that he knows. If he can please that person and be convincing to that person, the problem of tone will probably have been taken care of quite adequately.

There is another practical way of considering the problem: The author writes for a particular audience, but he also writes for himself. There is his own sense of fitness that must be satisfied. The writer himself becomes the audience at which he aims. The question which he asks himself is not, "Have I made this convincing to Tom, or to Dick, or to Harry?" but rather, "Have I made this convincing to myself?" or, to put the matter more succinctly still, "Have I made this convincing?"

## TONE AND OTHER COMPONENTS OF STYLE

It should be apparent that a particular tone is achieved by the interplay of various elements. Sentence structure, diction, and metaphor are only a few of those involved. Indeed, in discussing tone we have dealt in one way or another with nearly all the components of literary style. The only notable exception is that of rhythm. Since the tone of a work, taken in the deepest sense, most nearly embodies the organizing intelligence of a work — the "spirit" of a work — a brief discussion of rhythm would go far toward rounding out a simple account of the whole notion of literary style. (We shall mean by *style* the organization of meaning through form. Style represents "how" a thing is said, and how it is said goes far to determine what is said.)

### *Rhythm*

In discussing tone we pointed out that in actual conversation the tone of voice, gesture, and facial expression supplement the words and do much to set the particular tone which the speaker intends —

playfulness, seriousness, irritability, and so on. If we use the written word, however, the "tone" has to be established by the choice of words and the patterning of those words. But it will have occurred to the student that in moving from actual conversation to the written word the speaker relinquishes still another very important element — the matter of emphasis. Consider the following simple sentence: "Are you going to town?" If we stress the word *are*, the sentence becomes an emphatic question; and if we stress it heavily, it may even suggest surprise. But if we stress *you*, the question becomes centered upon whether it is *you* who are going rather than someone else. If we stress *town*, we get a third variation; the question then emphasizes the destination.

Thus the rhythmic inflection of a sentence, with its various stresses on particular words, is a very important way in which we express our meanings. When we put the sentence on paper, we can, of course, indicate some of this stress by underlining the words to be emphasized. But mere underlining is a relatively crude substitute for the living voice, and it is the mark of a clumsy writer to have to rely upon constant underlining. The skilled writer, by his control of the rhythm of his sentences, suggests where the proper emphases are to fall; for emphasis is an element of rhythm.

### *Rhythm and clarity of meaning*

Control of rhythm, then, is important for clarity of meaning. This fact is illustrated by the muddled and monotonous rhythms of technological jargon. Look back at the two examples of gobbledygook (pages 268-69). Jargon of this sort is difficult to read for a variety of reasons. It is fuzzy, abstract, and dull. It lacks flavor. But it lacks clarity as well; for there are no natural emphases, no obvious points of primary stress.

Consider the following sentence:

Oriental luxury goods — jade, silk, gold, spices, vermilion, jewels — formerly had come by way of the Caspian Sea overland; and a few daring Greek sea captains, now that this route had been cut by the Huns, catching the trade winds, were sailing from Red Sea ports and loading up at Ceylon.

The sentence is passable, and is not perhaps noticeably unrhythmical. But if we read this sentence in the form in which Robert Graves actually wrote it, we shall find that it is not only clearer, it is much more rhythmical and much easier to read:

Oriental luxury goods — jade, silk, gold, spices, vermillion, jewels — had formerly come overland by way of the Caspian Sea and now that this route had been cut by the Huns, a few daring Greek sea captains were sailing from Red Sea ports, catching the trade winds and loading up at Ceylon.

Emphatic rhythms tend to accompany emotional heightening. It is no accident that eloquent prose — prose that makes a strong appeal to the feelings — tends to use clearly patterned rhythms, or that poetry is commonly written in the systematized rhythm which we call “verse.” The association of formal rhythm with emotional power is based on a perfectly sound psychological fact. Fervent expression of grief, rage, or joy tends to fall into rhythmic patterns — whether it be the sobbings of a grief-stricken woman or the cursing of an irate cab driver.

The student may feel, however, that rhythm is much too intricate an instrument for him to try to use *consciously*. It almost certainly is. We do not suggest that the student consciously try for rhythmic effects. Yet a very practical use of rhythm can be made: the student may learn to use rhythm in order to test his composition. As he re-reads it aloud, he should learn to listen for the break in the rhythm, the jangling discord, the lack of smoothness that signals to him that something in the sentence is awry. This comment applies particularly to the disposition of modifiers, prepositional phrases, and the like. The student may find that reading his composition aloud and listening to its rhythms proves to be one of the best practical means for spotting sentence elements that are not in the best order.

## Style

The real difficulty in discussing style comes at this point. Style, as we have already had occasion to point out, is an over-all result. It is a result determined by the working together of sentence structure, vocabulary, figures of speech, rhythm, and many other elements. It is not always easy for a reader to pick out the element which is most important, or even largely important, in giving the style of the writer its special quality. It is quite impossible for a writer to produce a given quality of style by mechanically measuring out so much of this element and so much of that. A modern author has put the matter in this way: “Style is not an isolable quality of writing; it is writing itself.”

Like tone, rhythm represents the harmonious interplay of many diverse elements. Style itself, of which tone and rhythm are aspects, represents such an interplay. That is why it is difficult to discuss a

style *as such*. Yet there are a few general considerations with regard to style that are worth saying to the student. In the first place, style is never to be thought of as a mere veneer, a decorated surface laid over the content. In the second place, a writer's real difficulty in composition is to know what he really wants to say — not, as we are often tempted to think, merely how to say it. For in a good composition, form and content interpenetrate each other and are inseparable. In the third place, a bad style always reveals itself in some disharmony or cleavage between what is said and what we guess the author actually meant to say.<sup>6</sup> The discordant elements “stick out” — they call attention to themselves.

These last considerations bear upon another aspect of style: the originality of the writer. We properly take originality to be a symptom of a good style. If we see that style is not a veneer, but is the result of thousands of decisions and discriminations made by the writer, we can understand why style is always indelibly impressed with the writer's personality. If the personality is commonplace, the style will be commonplace. But the student needs to be warned against any excessive striving for originality as such. It is not enough to urge him to be his unique self, for frequently he finds that true self only through a process of exploration. Originality, the impress of personality, fortunately can be left to take care of itself if the writer manages to take care of what he can consciously control in his composition.

## ■ Applications

- 1 The following are general questions which the student should ask himself as he considers the passages quoted below.
  - 1 What is the author's attitude toward the reader? In what way is this shown?
  - 2 What is the author's attitude toward his material?
  - 3 Are there any instances of sentimentality? In what way is sentimentality revealed? Are there any instances of other kinds of overstatement? Is the overstatement justified or unjustified?
  - 4 Which of the passages, if any, makes use of understatement?
  - 5 Do any of the passages make use of irony? Try to charac-

<sup>6</sup> Ironic effects may seem to invite confusion with bad style since as we have observed earlier (page 300), irony always involves a discrepancy, a “disharmony,” between what is apparently said and what it is actually meant. But the confusion, if it occurs, is usually only momentary. The ironic discrepancy proves to be a device under the writer's control — not an ineptitude.



terize the kind of irony in each case — sarcasm, light mocking irony, bitter irony, gay irony, and so on

- 6 Are there any passages which are relatively toneless? Are there any which are confused in tone?

A [The mate] felt all the majesty of his great position, and made the world feel it too. When he gave even the simplest order he discharged it like a blast of lightning and sent a long reverberating peal of profanity thundering after it. I could not help contrasting the way in which the average landsman would give an order with the mate's way of doing it. If the landsman should wish the gang plank moved a foot farther forward, he would probably say "James, or William, one of you push that plank forward, please" but put the mate in his place, and he would roar out "Here now start that gang plank for'ard! Lively, now! What're you about! Snatch it! There! There! Aft again! aft again! Don't you hear me? Dash it to dash! are you going to sleep over it! 'Vast heaving 'Vast heaving, I tell you! Going to heave it clear astern? If *here're you* going with that barrel! for'ard with it 'fore I make you swallow it, you dash dash-dash *dashed* split between a tired mud turtle and a crippled hearse horse!" I wished I could talk like that

— SAMUEL L. CLEMENS *Life on the Mississippi*

Characterize the tone of the mate's speech. Characterize the author's attitude toward the mate. Be as specific as you can.

B It wasn't the bully amateur's world any more. Nobody knew that on armistice day, Theodore Roosevelt, happy amateur warrior with the grinning teeth, the shaking forefinger, naturalist explorer, magazine writer, Sunday-school teacher, cowpuncher, moralist, politician, righteous orator with a short memory, fond of denouncing liars (the Ananias Club) and having pillowfights with his children, was taken to the Roosevelt hospital gravely ill with inflammatory rheumatism.

Things weren't bully any more,

T. R. had grit,

he bore the pain, the obscurity, the sense of being forgotten as he had borne the grilling portages when he was exploring the River of Doubt, the heat, the fetid jungle mud, the infected abscess in his leg.

and died quietly in his sleep

at Sagamore Hill,

on January 6, 1919

and left on the shoulders of his sons

the white man's burden

— JOHN DOS PASSOS "The Happy Warrior," 1919<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From 1919, second volume of *U.S.A.* by John Dos Passos. Published by Houghton Mifflin Company.

**C** No man could have been more bitter against opponents, or more unfair to them or more ungenerous. In this department indeed, even so gifted a specialist in dishonorable controversy as Dr. (Woodrow) Wilson has seldom surpassed him. He never stood up to a frank and chivalrous debate. He dragged herrings across the trail. He made seductive faces to the gallery. He capitalized his enormous talents as an entertainer, his rank as a national hero, his public influence and consequence. The two great law suits in which he was engaged were screaming bufoesques upon justice. He tried them in the newspapers before ever they were called, he befogged them with irrelevant issues, his appearances in court were not the appearances of a witness standing on a level with other witnesses, but those of a comedian sure of his crowd. He was, in his dealings with concrete men as in his dealings with men in the mass, a charlatan of the very highest skill — and there was in him, it goes without saying, the persuasive charm of the charlatan as well as the daring deviousness, the humanness of naivete as well as the humanness of chicane. He knew how to woo — and not only boobs. He was, for all his ruses and ambushes, a jolly fellow.

— H. L. MENCKEN "Roosevelt: An Autopsy,"  
*Prejudices: Second Series* <sup>8</sup>

Both Dos Passos and Mencken exhibit definite attitudes toward Theodore Roosevelt, compare and contrast them. How does the attitude in each case color the writer's account? Cite specific instances.

- II A** The worst experience I ever had was being trapped in a cave. The idea of being all alone and in the dark and unable to move is enough to make most grown men afraid, and I was only fourteen. Even though the chances were I'd be found soon, I couldn't be dead sure. But I kept my head and this probably saved me from serious injury. The doctor said later that if I had tried to pull my foot loose I probably would have injured it severely. It was bad enough as it was, and the sprained ankle kept me on crutches for several weeks. My friends began kidding me about them after a while, but I think it's better to be safe than sorry. The doctor had told me to use the crutches as long as I wanted to.

**B** Getting trapped in a cave is no fun, but it's not the worst thing that can happen to you if you keep your head. After telling myself over and over "Keep your head, now," it struck me that it wasn't my head I was in danger of losing, it was my foot. I had to laugh, even in the fix I was in, and started telling myself, "Keep your foot,

<sup>8</sup> From "Roosevelt: An Autopsy" by H. L. Mencken. Reprinted from *Prejudices: Second Series* by H. L. Mencken by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Copyright 1920 by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Copyright 1948 by H. L. Mencken.

now." It sort of cheered me up and kept me from doing anything stupid.

When it was all over, people kept saying, "I'll bet you were scared to death." And my mother, after she got over her crying spell, would say, "Jimmie's not scared of anything." They were both wrong. I was scared, all right, but I kept seeing the funny side of it.

How would you characterize the tone of the first version? of the second? Finish the account of the experience, continuing the tone of the first or the second version. Attempt to rewrite this account, giving it still another tone — say one that might be used by a much younger child, or by a philosophical old man.

- III Review the following examples of tone given in this chapter — the excerpts from "Farewell, my Lovely," *Flowering Earth*, *Life on the Mississippi*, and Mencken's "Roosevelt: An Autopsy." In each case analyze the author's use of tone and style. Then write a theme of 500 to 700 words, imitating the style of one of these excerpts. The imitation should not be slavish, but the student should attempt to apply to his own writing all that he can learn from his model.

## ***Part Four***

### ***The Research Paper***

“”  
“”  
“”

## Chapter Thirteen

### Preparation and Note-Taking

Most of the longer papers that the student will be asked to write in his college courses will be research papers. That is, the student will be asked to make a study of some particular subject, to assemble materials, organize them, and incorporate them into a unified composition, with footnotes to indicate his authority for the various *statements that he makes*.

The research paper is a form, and a most important form, of expository discourse. We may want to investigate hydroponics or the architecture of Crusader castles or the nineteenth-century whaling industry or the Battle of Hastings or the present-day do-it-yourself vogue or a thousand and one other things. But at the end of our research, after we have read our books and magazines or have gone on our field trip or carried out our experiments in the laboratory, there remains the problem of organizing the results. Our facts and opinions need to be organized so as to present their meaning as lucidly and as tellingly as possible. Even if our investigation has been extensive and thorough, it may be wasted if we present its fruits in a muddled and confusing form.

Such a muddled presentation may indeed mean that we ourselves do not know what to make of the facts we have discovered. For facts do not automatically crystallize about a meaning. We have to find what the facts mean, and this involves thinking about them, analyzing them, and working out their implications. The problems to be faced then are those that we have already studied in earlier chapters. We shall need all we have learned about exposition and argument, with their topics on definition, classification, comparison and contrast, the various kinds of analysis, the nature of evidence, and the principles of induction and deduction. Sometimes a piece of descrip-

tion may be called for; or we may need to narrate the story of a man, an event, a process, or a development. We should, therefore, by this time already know a great deal about the methods involved in working out a research paper; and by the same token, the research paper should provide us at this point with a fine opportunity to review what we have learned.

## SOURCES

The aim of the research paper is to assemble facts and ideas from various sources, and by studying them, to draw new conclusions or to present the material in the light of a new interest. For instance, a military historian who wanted to understand why General Lee lost the Battle of Gettysburg would study the written records of orders and events, the correspondence and memoirs of witnesses, the actual terrain, and the interpretations of other historians. In the light of that evidence, he would try to frame an explanation. Or a literary critic who wanted to understand why a certain novelist often used certain themes would study the facts of the novelist's life as found in whatever sources were available (letters, memoirs, public records, biographies), the kind of education he received, the kind of ideas current in his particular place and time, and so forth. Such material would be his evidence. The researcher might discover new facts, and new facts can easily upset old theories. But he might have to depend on facts which were already available but were available only in scattered sources. Then his task would be to collect these facts and shape them into a new pattern of interpretation.

The book written by the professional historian or literary critic and the term paper written by a student use the same basic method: they collect the facts and interpret them. The term paper can be intelligent, well informed, interesting, and original. To make it so, the student must be systematic.

The first step toward making his paper systematic is to learn how to investigate his subject. There are two kinds of sources which he can use: primary and secondary. The historian going to the order book of a general or the terrain of a battlefield, the anthropologist observing the Indian tribe, or the literary scholar studying the manuscripts or letters of an author are using what are called primary sources; that is, firsthand information, the original documents. The college student must usually use secondary sources; that is, second-hand information, a report on, or analysis of, the original documents. He reads the report of the anthropologist or he studies an edition of a poet prepared by a scholar. There are also tertiary

sources — the digest of, or commentary on, the anthropologist's report (e.g., *The Reader's Digest* and *The Book Review Digest*). These the student should not use unless he cannot get access to the secondary or primary sources. Even when he has no choice but to cite a tertiary source, he should do so with great caution. Get as close to the facts as possible. No matter how good your reasoning is, it is useless if the facts on which it works are not dependable.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

The research paper, we have said, draws its material from many sources. It is not a digest of one book or article. But how do you get at the useful sources?

Reference books are a good starting point. Some of the more important reference books are listed below (with abbreviated entries).

### GENERAL DICTIONARIES (UNABRIDGED)

*Dictionary of American English*. 1938 1944. 4 vols.  
*Oxford English Dictionary*. 12 vols. and supplement. 1933.  
*Webster's New International Dictionary*. 1934, 1950.

### SPECIAL DICTIONARIES

Evans, Bergen and Cornelia. *Dictionary of Contemporary American Usage* 1957.  
Fowler, H. W. *Dictionary of Modern English Usage*. 1926, 1954.  
Horwill, H. W. *Dictionary of Modern American Usage*. 2nd ed. 1944.  
Partridge, Eric, ed. *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*. 1950.  
*Roget's Thesaurus of Words and Phrases*. 1947.  
*Webster's Dictionary of Synonyms*. 1942.

### GENERAL ENCYCLOPEDIAS

*Encyclopedia Americana*. 1955. 30 vols.  
*Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 1954. 24 vols.

Note: Each of these encyclopedias publishes an annual supplement which should be consulted for additional, recent information.

*Americana Annual*. 1923-  
*Britannica Book of the Year*. 1938-  
*New International Year Book*. 1907-

*New International Encyclopedia*. 1922-1930. 27 vols.

### ATLASES AND GAZETTEERS

*Collier's New World Atlas and Gazetteer*. 1953.  
*Columbia Atlas*. Ed. John Bartholomew. 1954.  
*Columbia Lippincott Gazetteer of the World*. 1952.

*Encyclopaedia Britannica World Atlas.* 1954  
*Goode's World Atlas* 9th ed 1953.  
*Hammond's Ambassador World Atlas.* 1954  
*Atlas of World History* (Palmer) 1957  
*Times* (London) *Atlas of the World* 1955 1960. 5 vols.  
*Webster's Geographical Dictionary* 1949.

#### YEARBOOKS — CURRENT EVENTS

*American Yearbook* 1910-1919, 1925-  
*Information Please Almanac.* 1947-  
*Statesman's Year-Book.* 1864-  
*Statistical Abstract of the United States.* 1878-  
*World Almanac.* 1868-

#### GENERAL GUIDES

Besterman, Theodore. *World Bibliography of Bibliographies.* 2nd ed. 1949 3 vols.  
 Ireland, Norma *An Index to Indexes* 1942  
 Winchell, Constance M. *Guide to Reference Books.* 7th ed. 1951.  
 Supplements 1950-1955  
 Subject Guide to Books in Print, an index to the *Publishers' Trade List Annual* 1957-  
*Cumulative Book Index.* A World List of Books in the English Language. 1898-  
*United States Catalog. Books in Print* (1899 1934)

#### GENERAL PERIODICAL INDEXES

*Book Review Digest.* 1905-  
*International Index to Periodicals.* 1907-  
*New York Times Index.* 1913-  
*Poole's Index to Periodical Literature* 1802 1907.  
*Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature.* 1900-  
*Ulrich's Periodicals Directory*, a classified guide to a selected list of current periodicals, foreign and domestic. 8th ed. 1956.

#### SPECIAL REFERENCES

##### *Agriculture*

*Agricultural Index.* 1916  
 Bailey, L. H. *Cyclopedia of American Agriculture.* 1917. 4 vols.  
 U. S. Department of Agriculture. *Yearbook of Agriculture.* 1894-

##### *Art and Architecture*

*Art Index* 1929-  
*Harper's Encyclopedia of Art.* 1937. 2 vols.  
 Fletcher, Banister. *A History of Architecture* 14th ed 1948.

##### *Biography*

Cattell, J. *American Men of Science* 9th ed 1955-1956. 3 vols.  
*Current Biography.* 1940-



*Dictionary of National Biography* (British). 1885-1949. 22 vols.  
 Kunitz, S J and Haycraft, H. *Twentieth Century Authors*. 1942  
 Supplement, 1955  
*Webster's Biographical Dictionary*. 1953.  
*Who's Who* 1849  
*Who's Who in America*. 1899-

#### Business

*Industrial Arts Index*. 1913-  
 Munn, Glenn G *Encyclopedia of Banking and Finance*. 1949. Sup-  
 plements to 1955.  
 U. S. Department of Commerce.  
*Commerce Yearbook*. 1922-1932.  
*Survey of Current Business*. 1921-  
*The Prentice-Hall Encyclopedic Dictionary of Business*. 1952.

#### Classical Literature and Mythology

Harvey, Sir Paul. *Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* 2nd ed.  
 1937  
*Oxford Classical Dictionary*. 1949.

#### Education

*Education Index*. 1929-  
 Monroe, P *Cyclopedia of Education* 1911-1913. 5 vols.  
 Harris, Chester W *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*. 3rd ed  
 1960.

#### History

Langer, William L *An Encyclopedia of World History*. Rev ed 1948  
 Adams, J. T. *Dictionary of American History*. 1942. 5 vols.  
*Cambridge Ancient History*. 1923 1939 12 vols.  
*Cambridge Mediaeval History* 1911 1936 8 vols.  
*Cambridge Modern History*. 2nd ed. 1926. 14 vols.

#### Literature

*Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* 1955.  
*Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*. 1953.  
*Cambridge History of English Literature* 1907-1927. 15 vols.  
*Cambridge History of American Literature*. 1917-1921 4 vols.  
*New Century Handbook of English Literature* 1956  
*Oxford History of English Literature*. 1945-. 12 vols (not all pub-  
 lished).  
 Harvey, Sir Paul *Oxford Companion to English Literature* 3rd ed.  
 1946.  
 Hart, James D. *Oxford Companion to American Literature* 3rd ed.  
 1956.  
 Stevenson, B E *Home Book of Quotations*. 1947.  
 Spiller, R. E and others *Literary History of the United States*. 1948.  
 5th ed. 1956. 3 vols.

Smith, Horatio, ed. *Columbia Dictionary of Modern European Literature*. 1947.

Shipley, Joseph T. *Dictionary of World Literature*. New ed. 1953.

English Association. *Year's Work in English Studies*. 1920-

#### Music

Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. 5th ed. 1954. 9 vols.

Thompson, O. *International Cyclopaedia of Music and Musicians*. 7th ed. 1956.

Scholes, P. A. *Oxford Companion to Music*. 9th ed. 1955.

Lang, Paul H. *Music in Western Civilization*. 1941.

#### Psychology

*Psychological Abstracts*. 1927-

*Psychological Index*. 1894-1935.

Harriman. *The New Dictionary of Psychology*. 1947.

#### Religion

Cross, F. L. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. 1958.

*Catholic Encyclopedia*. 1907-1922. 17 vols.

Hastings, James. *Dictionary of the Bible*. 1898-1904. 5 vols.

Hastings, James, ed. *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. 1908-1927. 13 vols.

*Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*. 1939-1944. 10 vols.

#### Science and Technology

*Engineering Index*. 1884-

Hawkins, R. R. *Scientific, Medical, and Technical Books Published in the United States of America*. A selected list of titles in print with annotations. 1930-1944. Supplements 1950, 1953.

*Van Nostrand's Scientific Encyclopedia*. 3rd ed. 1958.

The McGraw-Hill *Encyclopedia of Science and Technology*. 1960. 15 vols.

Henderson, I. F. and Henderson, W. D. *Dictionary of Scientific Terms in Biology, Botany, Zoology, Anatomy, Cytology, Embryology, Physiology*. 6th ed. 1957.

Reference books are so numerous and sometimes so specialized that it is often helpful to consult the *Guide to Reference Books*, by Constance M. Winchell, to know where to go in the first place.

The reference book will give an introduction to a subject and certain basic facts. Best of all for the student, it will usually offer a bibliography, a list of other works on the subject — books or articles less limited in scope than the treatment in the reference book itself. With this as a starting point the student can make up his own *working bibliography* for his subject. As he reads into his subject he will encounter references to other works, and can gradually ex-

tend the range of his working bibliography. The subject catalogue of the library will also provide new items.

The working bibliography should be kept on convenient cards of uniform size, with only one entry to a card. This allows the student to arrange them in alphabetical or other order (by topics, for example), according to his need. The entry on the card should contain all the basic information about a book or article: the author's name with the last name first, the title of the work, the volume number, if any, the place of publication, the publisher, the date of publication. If the work appears in a periodical or collection, that fact should be indicated with volume number, the date, and the pages occupied by the work.

This form of card entry is to be retained in making up the final bibliography to be attached to your finished paper. There the order will be alphabetical by authors. Your final bibliography may be shorter than your working bibliography, for the final bibliography should contain no entry from which you have not taken material for the actual paper, whereas certain items in your working bibliography may have been dropped as more valuable items came to light.

#### ENTRY FOR A BOOK

Strachey, Lytton, Elizabeth and Essex, London, Chatto and Windus, 1928.

#### ENTRY FOR AN ARTICLE

Barrington, Margaret, "The Censorship in Eire," Commonweal, XLVI, August 15, 1947, 429-32.

What items should be included in the student's working bibliography? The professional scholar may want to work through all the material on his subject, but the student preparing a term paper scarcely has the time for such a program. Many items in the bibliographies he encounters are antiquated or trivial. So to save his time and energy, he should try to select the items which will best repay his attention. There is no rule for selecting a bibliography. The student, however, can sometimes get ideas from a similarly selected bibliography in a textbook or other book on his subject. Sometimes an author will refer with special respect to certain other

works on his subject. The student can also take his working bibliography to his instructor and ask for comment.

### ■ *Applications*

- I Perhaps the instructor in one of your courses has already assigned a general topic for a research paper. If not, choose a general topic. The list of topics on page 40 may give you some ideas.
- II Having chosen your topic, make a preliminary bibliography for it.

### NOTES

Unless you take notes on your reading you will probably not be able to remember much of the relevant material and will certainly not be able to organize it well when you write your paper. If you have taken your notes carefully, you will be able to lay out before you the whole subject and put it in order. Then the paper will almost write itself. If the notes are to give you the most help, they must have a convenient mechanical form. Notes can be put on note cards (usually 4" x 6" or 5" x 7"). Not more than one note, however brief, should be on a card. This rule should be strictly adhered to, even when the notes are on the same topic; for when you take the notes, you cannot be sure in what order you will eventually use them. Only if each note is independent can you arrange them in the order desired when you write your paper. Each note should carry at the top, at the left or toward the center, some indication of the precise content — not the general subject of your investigation, but some subtopic. And at the top right or at the bottom, the note should carry an adequate reference to the source from which it is drawn. Presumably the full bibliographical information about that source is already in your working bibliography, and so some skeleton notation will be adequate here. (When you are taking notes not related to a working bibliography — when, for example, you are doing general reading — you should record full bibliographical information with the note.) See specimen card on page 326.

When we look at the actual note on the card we see that several other phrases might have been used to indicate the topic discussed; for instance, "American business mysticism," or "American materialism." All that is needed is a word or phrase which will remind the note-taker of the content. We notice, too, that after the direct quo-

American success worship    Chesterton, What I  
                                          Saw in America,  
                                          pp. 107-10

American worship of success not materialistic. Fact of worship means a mystic rather than a materialist. Frenchman who saves money to retire and enjoy his omelet more of a materialist. American does not work for the enjoyment of things, but for some ideal vision of success. He does not want the dollar for what it will buy but as a symbol. Phrase "making good" illustrates the fact; carries a moral connotation by a "sort of ethical echo in the word" good (p. 108). Not necessarily an admirable morality, but a morality implied, and idealism of a kind.

tation there is a parenthesis with the page number. The note-taker apparently feels that this is a telling phrase worth remembering and perhaps using. If he quotes it, he will want the exact page reference.

As for the bibliographical indication at the upper right, he might have reduced it simply to "Chesterton" if there was no Chesterton other than G. K. Chesterton on his bibliography and no other book by that author. This, like the topic indication, is for his own convenience and need tell no more than he himself has to know to identify the source.

So much for the mechanics of note-taking. As for the process, you should make your notes relevant, accurate, and clear. To make them relevant you must keep constantly in mind the main purpose of your investigation. You are studying a particular subject with particular limits. (Remember in this connection what was said on page 10 with regard to a "true subject.") You are not concerned with anything only casually associated with the subject. If, for instance, you are reading a general history to find information on the subject of the economic background of the American Revolution, you should not be distracted by military strategy of the French and Indian War or an analysis of Puritan theology. Your job is to follow your main purpose through a body of various materials, and often what is major for you will be minor in the work you are investigating.

It is possible to take notes prematurely. Therefore, it is always best to become acquainted with a work before you take notes from

it. In your first reading you may indicate material for possible notes and pass on. When you have finished the work, or those parts relevant to your interest, you can then better assess the material for possible notes. In this way you will get from any particular work only the most pertinent notes, and you will avoid duplication.

The note itself may be direct quotation or summary. If direct quotation is used, it is sometimes valuable to record the context of the quotation. What leads the author to make his statement? What point does he try to establish by it? You do not want to misinterpret your author by implication. For instance, suppose a critic should write:

Although Herman Melville has created in Captain Ahab of *Moby Dick* a character of intense interest and monumental proportions, he has in general little sense of the shadings of personality and motive. Most of his creations are schematic, mere outlines without flesh. He lacks that basic gift of the novelist, a sense of character.

If you, assembling material for a paper on Melville as a novelist, should merely quote, "Herman Melville has created in Captain Ahab of *Moby Dick* a character of intense interest and monumental proportions," you would have a misleading note. An accurate note would run something like this:

Even though this critic believes that Melville in general lacks a sense of character, he admits that Captain Ahab is a "character of intense interest and monumental proportions."

This principle of context holds good for both the note by summary and the note by quotation.

When you are taking notes by summary, the kind of summary to be used depends on the special case. In one case, the author's method of reasoning may be very important, and then the summary should be of a form to indicate the logical structure of the original text. In another case, where mere facts or scattered opinions are involved, the summary need record merely these facts and opinions. As for the scale of the summary, there is no guiding principle except the note-taker's need. Try to forecast what you will need when you actually come to write your paper; not merely what you will want to incorporate in the paper, but what you will need in order to understand your subject fully.

Once your notes are taken, how do you use them? This again depends on the kind of subject with which you are dealing. Some subjects suggest a chronological order, others a logical order. For instance, if you are doing a paper on Keats's development as a poet you might first arrange your notes chronologically — notes on early

poems, notes on middle poems, notes on late poems. But if your subject is an analysis of the themes of Keats's poems, you might try to arrange your notes by themes, trying various classifications until you have one that seems to make sense. Or you might find, sometimes, that two levels of organization are necessary. For instance, certain themes of Keats's poems might be characteristic of certain periods. Then having established one type of classification (by theme), you might run another type (by chronology). Notes are flexible. You can use them as a device to help your thinking, or to help you organize your material.

Notes record questions and issues. The different authors you have consulted have had individual approaches to the general subject, different interests, different conclusions. As you work over your cards you can locate these differences and try to see what they mean to you in your special project. Ask yourself if there is any pattern of disagreement among the authors you have consulted. List the disagreements. Are they disagreements of fact or of interpretation? Compare the evidence and reasoning offered by the authors who are in disagreement. Can you think of any new evidence or new line of reasoning on disputed points? Can you think of any significant points not discussed by your authors? What bearing would such points have on their conclusions? Again, use your notes as a device to help your thinking.

## THE OUTLINE

The outline has two uses. It can help the writer to organize his own thoughts and lay a plan for his work before he begins the actual composition. And it can help the reader to define the basic meaning and structure of what he reads. The two uses have much in common, for both mean that the maker of the outline is dealing with the structure of a discourse. In fact, once an outline is completed, an observer might not be able to tell whether it was designed by a writer or a reader.

### *Types of outlines*

There are several common types of outlines: (1) the suggestive, or scratch outline, (2) the topic outline, (3) the sentence outline, and (4) the paragraph outline. Variations may be worked out for special purposes.

(1) THE SCRATCH OUTLINE. The scratch outline is a set of notes and jottings which may come in handy either for writing or for under-

standing and remembering what one has read. It is probably not highly organized. For instance, the student, in making a preliminary survey of his notes, may simply put down the various topics and ideas that come to him in the order in which they come. As some line of thought begins to emerge he may indicate this, too. But his primary purpose is not to define the form and order from the beginning. It is to assemble suggestive material from his notes. Some of it he may not use because, in the end, it may seem superfluous or irrelevant. The scratch outline embodies the early exploration of a subject, and may be meaningless to everybody except the maker of the outline.

(2) THE TOPIC OUTLINE. The topic outline does indicate the order of treatment of individual topics and does indicate in a systematic fashion, by heads and subheads, the relation among the parts in degree of importance. But as the name indicates, it proceeds, not by sentences, but by listing topics. There is, however, one exception: the outline should be introduced by a statement of the theme of the composition in the form of a fully rounded sentence. Let us set up a topic outline based on an essay by Louis D. Brandeis called "True Americanism."

*Statement:* True Americanism is defined as the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, for both individuals and nations.

- I. Motto of United States, *E pluribus unum*
  - A. Union through federation of many states
  - B. Nation created through mixture of many peoples
    1. Immigration important in growth of nation
    2. Immigrants Americanized through liberty
- II. Nature of Americanization
  - A. Adoption of language, manners, and customs
  - B. Development of affection for and interests in United States
  - C. Harmonization with American ideals
- III. American ideals
  - A. Development of the individual through liberty
  - B. Attainment of common good through democracy and social justice
  - C. Achievement of American standard of living
    1. Good working conditions
    2. Education throughout life
    3. Industrial freedom for the individual
    4. Financial security through social insurance
  - D. Inclusive brotherhood
    1. Equality of individual accepted by other countries



2. Equality of nationalities and races accepted only by United States

The student should understand that the headings in this outline do *not* correspond to paragraph divisions. Heading I, for example, may correspond to only one paragraph; heading II may cover several paragraphs. That is, the outline is not by paragraphs but by topics. Not infrequently we find that a topic which looms very important in the outline will correspond to only part of a paragraph in the text. The outline indicates the relative importance of a topic and not the amount of space devoted to it.

(3) THE SENTENCE OUTLINE. The sentence outline is the most complete and formal type. Here, every entry is in the form of a complete sentence. As with the topic outline, the entries in the sentence outline should correspond to the content and the order of arrangement in the text. The sentence outline differs from the topic outline in indicating more fully the content of each item and the relation among the items. To fulfill these requirements, the sentences should be very precise and to the point. Vague statements defeat the very purpose of the sentence outline and make such an outline look like merely an inflated topic outline. For the sentence outline should really take us deeper into the subject, defining the items more closely and indicating the structure more fully. By and large, the topic outline will serve for fairly simple material, the sentence outline for more complicated material. In setting up a sentence outline, main heads should be given Roman numerals; the subdivisions, scaling down in importance, should be marked *A*, *I*, *a*. A dummy form will make the system clear:

- I. ....
- A. ....
- 1. ....
- a. ....
- b. ....
- 2. ....
- a. ....
- b. ....
- B. ....
- 1. ....
- a. ....
- b. ....
- 2. ....
- II. ....
- A. etc.

It is important to keep the indentations on the left margin consistent in each class and to be sure that a class of lower importance is more deeply indented than the class just above it. If more subdivisions are needed than are indicated here, the system can be begun over again with the key numerals and letters in parentheses. For instance, if subdivisions are needed under *a*, we can use (*I*), (*A*), (*I*), and so forth. But for ordinary purposes such an extension is rarely necessary.

Here is an example of a sentence outline made up from the first six paragraphs of an essay by Arthur Koestler on "Seven Deadly Fallacies":

*Statement:* A mature foreign policy for the United States must be free of seven dangerous fallacies.

- I. Neither war hysteria nor appeasement can produce a mature foreign policy.
- II. There are seven fallacies which can interfere with a sound policy.
  - A. The first fallacy is the confusion between East and Left.
  - B. The second fallacy is that the United States is not worthy to be the leader of the free world.
    1. The United States has certain defects as a democracy and in its foreign policy.
    2. Only a perfect democracy can defend Europe.

(4) **THE PARAGRAPH OUTLINE.** In the paragraph outline each sentence corresponds to a paragraph in the text. In dealing with a very obviously organized piece of writing, the paragraph outline may be practically composed of the topic sentences, or adaptations of the topic sentences, of the paragraphs. (It is possible, of course, to make a paragraph outline of entries which are not complete sentences, but such a paragraph outline would have little utility. It would consist of little more than suggestive notes for paragraphs.) In dealing with other kinds of writing, however, it is necessary to summarize for each paragraph the content and intention. The paragraph outline has a very limited utility. On the one hand, in dealing with work composed by someone else, the paragraph outline often misses the real logical organization; for, as we have seen, paragraphs do not necessarily represent logical stages. On the other hand, in dealing in a preliminary way with material about which one intends to write oneself, not only may the outline fail to indicate the logical organization desired, but it may be arbitrary and misleading. It is very hard to predict the paragraph-by-paragraph development of any relatively extensive or complicated piece of work. To try to do so sometimes cramps and confuses the writer in the actual process of

composition The paragraph outline is chiefly valuable as a check on your own writing In trying to make a paragraph outline of one of your own compositions, you may discover that some of your paragraphs have no proper center or function, and so may be led to revise

Here is a sample of a paragraph outline designed to schematize the first three paragraphs of an essay by B. F. Skinner on "Freedom and the Control of Men"

- I. The democratic philosophy which made possible the rise of modern science has prevented the full application of scientific principles to the conduct of human affairs
- II. Science can explain human behavior by conditions outside the individual and hence, it can produce desired behavior in men
- III. The science of behavior is similar to the optimistic eighteenth and nineteenth century doctrines of human perfectibility, which democracy has lately lost sight of

### *Outlining the research paper*

By working over your notes and thinking about ideas suggested in them you will probably strike on some vague general plan for your paper But do not commit yourself to the first plan that comes into your head Consider various possibilities Then when you have chosen the most promising, try to work up an outline on that basis You will undoubtedly start with a scratch outline, the barest shadow of the paper you want to write By checking back on your material you can begin to fill in the outline and determine the relation among the facts and ideas you wish to present So you will arrive at a more fully organized outline Perhaps a topic outline will serve your purpose, but at some stage a sentence outline will probably be helpful, for to make it you will have to state clearly and exactly what you mean

Once you have an outline prepared you can begin the actual composition Use your outline as a guide, but do not consider yourself bound by it As you write, new ideas will probably come to you, and if they are good ideas you should revise your outline to accommodate them. The outline is not sacred. Like your notes, it is simply a device to help you think. And remember that your paper should be a fully rounded composition, unified and coherent, emphasizing matters according to the scale of their importance The outline is only a start toward creating a fluent, well proportioned discussion

Your paper should be more than a tissue of facts and quotations

from your notes. It should represent your handling of a subject and not a mere report on what other writers have said. Naturally, a large part of your material will be derived from other writers, but you should always ask yourself just what a fact or idea means in relation to your own purpose. If there is no proper place for it in your pattern, it should be excluded. A writer who has studied his subject well always has more material than he can use.

## THE FORM OF FOOTNOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Full credit should be given for the source of every fact or idea derived from another writer. In your own text you will want to acknowledge any important item as a matter of help to your reader. It is easy to introduce a statement or a quotation by a clear explanatory phrase or sentence. We are all accustomed to such introductory remarks as these:

Charles A. Beard has proved that . . .

James Truslow Adams maintains that . . .

An excellent statement of this view is given by James Truslow Adams in his *Epic of America*: . . .

As Sinclair Lewis shows in *Main Street*, the culture of the American town is . . .

On the other hand, a liberal economist such as Paul Douglas holds that . . .

As Thomas Wolfe observed . . .

Some facts or ideas can simply be stated in your text if the fact or idea is not especially to be associated with the particular writer from whom you derived it. But in all cases, authority should be given in a footnote.

Exactly what must be footnoted? First, every direct quotation is identified in a footnote. Second, every statement of fact is referred to its source in a footnote. The student must use his discretion about documenting commonly known facts that are available in many sources. It is not necessary, for example, to cite an authority for the fact that the world is round. But it is probably necessary to document an assertion that the world is actually the shape of a grapefruit or a slightly squishy cantaloupe, the account given by present-day scientists. Third, every opinion or interpretation drawn from another writer should be referred to its source in a footnote, *even if the opinion or interpretation is one which you have independently come upon in your own thinking*. In cases where a group of facts

or opinions treated together in one paragraph is drawn from the same source, one note at the end of the paragraph will serve for all the material. In cases where more than one source is involved for a single item in the text, one note will serve to acknowledge the several sources.

### Footnotes

Variation in certain details is permissible in the form of footnotes — as we shall see in the discussion to follow — *but not* within the same paper. Learn one of the standard forms and use it consistently in all your work. Here are a few general principles:

(1) The author's name appears in direct form, not with the last name first as in the bibliography.

(2) The title of a book or periodical is underlined in typescript or writing. This corresponds to italics in print. Even a relatively short piece of writing which has independent publication is considered a book. Sometimes a piece of writing, a poem for instance, first appears independently as a little book and is later included in a collection of the author's work. Practice varies in treating such items, but it is permissible to treat it as a book. Thus, we would underscore the title of T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets, but we might quote "Burnt Norton" (which is one of the four poems included) or we might underscore it.

(3) The title of an item in a periodical appears in quotation marks.

(4) When an item is first mentioned in a footnote, full bibliographical information is given. Later references use a brief identifying form, to be described later.

Here are examples of various types of footnotes. Observe carefully the form of punctuation, the nature of the material included, and the order of the items presented.

#### FOOTNOTES FOR BOOKS:

##### *One author:*

<sup>1</sup> Gerald G. Walsh, *Dante Alighieri: Citizen of Christendom* (Milwaukee, 1946), p. 17.

##### *More than one author:*

<sup>1</sup> William Buell Meldrum and Frank Thomson Gucker, Jr., *Introduction to Theoretical Chemistry* (New York, 1936), p. 133.

##### *Translation:*

<sup>1</sup> Anton Chekhov, *The Party and Other Stories*, trans. Constance Garnett (London, 1919), p. 43.

*Work in more than one volume*

- <sup>1</sup> Morris Bishop, ed. *A Survey of French Literature* (New York, 1955), II, 77 [Here the abbreviation *ed* is for editor]

*Edited work*

- <sup>1</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, *Short Stories*, ed. Killis Campbell (New York, 1927), p. xxiii

#### FOOTNOTES FOR ITEMS FROM COLLECTIONS

- <sup>1</sup> Wendell L. Willkie "Freedom and the Liberal Arts," in *The Humanities after the War*, ed. Norman Foerster (Princeton, 1944), p. 5.

#### FOOTNOTES FOR ITEMS FROM PERIODICALS

- <sup>1</sup> Henry Albert Phillips, "The Pith of Peru," *National Geographic*, LXXXII (August 1942), 169  
[Here the Roman numerals give the volume number of the periodical. The last number, 169, is the page reference. Notice that the abbreviation *p* is omitted for periodicals after the volume number.]
- <sup>1</sup> Peter F. Drucker, "The Industrial Revolution Hits the Farmer," *Harper's*, No. 1074 (November 1939), 593  
[When, as here, the magazine carries an issue number and not a volume number, the issue number appears "No. 1074." But many authorities prefer the volume number, e.g., CLXXIX (November 1939), 593.]

Note: When certain items of information are missing, as in a government document or newspaper account which has no author, put the items in the same order, simply omitting any unavailable information.

#### FOOTNOTES FOR ITEMS FROM THE BIBLE

- <sup>1</sup> Psalms 23:6-8  
[Here the first number is for chapter, the others for verses, inclusive.]
- <sup>1</sup> II Cor. 6:9  
[Here the abbreviation *II Cor.* stands for Second Corinthians. Certain books of the Bible have such standard abbreviations.]

All the forms given above indicate the first reference to a work. For subsequent references, three forms may be used. When the source in a footnote is the same as that indicated in the footnote immediately preceding, the abbreviation *ibid.* (for *ibidem*: in the same place) is used, with a new page reference if that is needed. For example:

- <sup>1</sup> Arthur Mizener, "The Desires of the Mind," *Sewanee Review*, LX, 462  
<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 464.

When the reference to be repeated does not immediately precede, either of two basic forms may be used. If only one work by a par-

ticular author is referred to in the footnotés, his last name may be used, followed by the page reference, or his last name with the abbreviation *op. cit.* (for *opere citato*: in the work cited), with the page reference. The first practice is simpler, and is becoming more common than the other. For example:

- <sup>1</sup> Arthur Mizener, "The Desires of the Mind," *Sewanee Review*, LX, 462.  
<sup>2</sup> Wendell L. Willkie, "Freedom and the Liberal Arts," in *The Humanities after the War*, ed. Norman Foerster (Princeton, 1944), p. 5.  
<sup>3</sup> Mizener, 464.

If the author has more than one work referred to in the footnotes, then his last name will not be enough, and an abbreviated title will be necessary.

- <sup>1</sup> Mizener, "Desires," 464. Or: <sup>1</sup> Walsh, *Dante*, p. 19.  
[Notice that the abbreviation *p.* is omitted in the Mizener reference, for the reference is to a periodical, while it is used in the Walsh reference, which is to a book. In other words, the short form follows the practice of the long form in this respect.]

When material is not drawn directly from its original source but from some intermediary source, acknowledgment should be made to both sources. For instance, the following note indicates that the writer has used a quotation from Stephen Spender which appeared in a book by Moody E. Prior:

- <sup>1</sup> Stephen Spender, *The Destructive Element*, p. 11, quoted by Moody E. Prior, *The Language of Tragedy* (New York, 1947), p. 343.

We have already referred to the abbreviations *ibid.* and *op. cit.* But there are a number of other abbreviations found in notes and bibliographical forms. You will not find a use for all of them in your own writing, but you will sooner or later encounter them in works which you read. Some of the Latin abbreviations are now commonly replaced by English forms or may be omitted altogether (as with *op. cit.*). In using such abbreviations, the main thing is to be consistent: Use either Latin or English throughout any composition.

anon. Anonymous.

c. (*circa*) About a certain date (to be used to indicate an approximate date, when the real date cannot be determined).

cf. (*confer*) Compare.

ch., chap., or chaps. Chapter(s).

**col. or cols.** Column(s)  
**ed.** Edited by editor or edition  
***et al. (et alii)*** And others (when a book has several authors the name of the first author followed by *et al* may replace the full list)  
**f or ff** One or more pages following the page indicated  
***ibid.* (*ibidem*)** In the same work (referring to a work cited in a note immediately preceding)  
***idem*** Exactly the same reference title and page as that given above.  
***infra*** Below (indicating a later discussion)  
**l or ll.** Line(s)  
***loc. cit.* (*loco citato*)** In the place cited (when there is an earlier reference to the source)  
**MS** Manuscript  
**n.d.** No date (when publication date cannot be determined)  
**no.** Number (as when listing the number of the issue of a periodical or series)  
**n.p.** No place (when place of publication cannot be determined)  
***op. cit.* (*opere citato*)** In the work cited (used with author's name to indicate source already referred to)  
**p or pp** Page(s)  
***passim*** In various places (used when the topic referred to appears in several places in a work cited)  
***q.v.* (*quod vide*)** Which see (English form see)  
**rev.** Revised  
***see*** Used to suggest that the reader consult a certain work referred to  
***seq.* (*sequentia*)** Following (English form f or ff)  
***supra*** Above (when the topic referred to has already been discussed)  
**tr. or trans** Translated by, translator, or translation  
***vide*** See (English form see)  
**vol. or vols.** Volume(s) (but 'vol ' and 'p ' are not used if figures for both are given as in listing a periodical reference, in such cases, use Roman numerals for volume and Arabic for page II, 391)

## Bibliography

After you have prepared a draft of your paper and established all your footnotes, you are ready to set up your final bibliography. This may differ from your working bibliography, as was pointed out above, in that it contains only items which are actually referred to in your paper, not items which have been consulted but not used.

The form for such a bibliography permits certain minor variations. For instance, the place without the publisher is sometimes given, and there may be differences in punctuation. For example, the following entry can be punctuated in two ways



Barnes, Harry Elmer. *The Genesis of the World War*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926.

or:

Barnes, Harry Elmer, *The Genesis of the World War*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1926.

But in all forms the author's name comes first, with the last name first, followed by the full title of the work, the periodical or series if any, the place of publication, the publisher (if this form is used), and the date of publication. The items may be arranged in either of two ways. First, in a straight alphabetical order, according to the last name of the author or, if there is no author, by the main word of the title. Second, alphabetically within certain groups determined by the material dealt with: "Books," "Periodicals," "Documents," and so forth. Here are some examples of entries as they might appear in the bibliography of a paper on Woodrow Wilson:

- (Periodical) Baker, Ray Stannard. "Our Next President and Some Others." *American Magazine*, LXXIV (June 1912).
- (Book) Barnes, Harry Elmer. *The Genesis of the World War*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926.
- (Document) *Congressional Record*, XLIX-LI, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1913-1914.
- (Book) McAdoo, Eleanor R. W. *The Woodrow Wilsons*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1937.
- (Book) Wilson, Woodrow. *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson*. Eds. Ray Stannard Baker and William Edward Dodd, 3 vols. New York: Harper and Bros., 1925-1927.
- (Periodical) Wilson, Woodrow. "Democracy and Efficiency." *Atlantic Monthly*, LXXXVII (March 1901), 289-299.

Notice that an over-all alphabetical order is given, by author when an author is specified, and by leading word when there is no author ("Congressional"). In this short bibliography all types of sources are grouped together — books, collections, periodicals, and documents. In a long bibliography such types might be set up as separate, each group in alphabetical order.

## Chapter Fourteen

### The Final Version: Writing and Rewriting

Throughout this book we have been insisting that in good writing all the elements are interrelated. There is no such thing as “good” diction apart from the context in which it occurs, or “correct” tone abstracted from a specific occasion. In good writing the principles of unity, coherence, and emphasis apply at all levels — not only to the larger blocks of the composition, but to the individual phrases and even the individual words.

Though this principle of interrelation, if clearly understood by the student, can illuminate the problems of writing, it can also be inhibiting. Confronted with the demand that every item in his composition be ultimately related to everything else, the student writer may not know where to start. He may feel that in a fabric so intricately interwoven, there are no seams — no natural divisions with which to begin. It may be well, therefore, in this last chapter to do two things. The first will be to review the typical methods by which one builds up a composition. The second thing will be to point out the importance of *rewriting*. Even professional writers rarely achieve an adequate unification of elements in the first draft. In this chapter we shall want to examine very carefully — and with concrete examples — what is involved in the process of rewriting.

#### WRITING THE PAPER

Let us assume that the student has been assigned a term paper that is to deal with some aspect of American history — political,

economic, cultural, or military. He may, if he likes, write about early movies or the development of the steel industry or the exploits of John Paul Jones. He happens to be interested, however, in the American Civil War, particularly as that war revealed the adaptation to warfare of the new machines and techniques of the dawning industrial age. He first thinks about treating the use in the Civil War of balloons for military observation, but decides that this topic is rather limited. He then seriously considers discussing the development of the iron-clad ship as exemplified by the *Merrimac* and the *Monitor*. Finally, it occurs to him that the role of the railroads in the Civil War might offer him not only a topic in which he has a particular interest (his uncle is an official of a railroad) but one which would allow him a good deal of scope.

On reflection, he begins to fear that the topic offers him too much scope. In an important sense the whole of the War was, he realizes, a fight for control of means of communication — railroads and navigable rivers. He is up against the problem we dealt with earlier in this book (see page 10), the problem of finding a “true subject.” Discussion of the total strategy of the war would be more than he wants to attempt, but he feels that in the process of research and writing he may be able to grasp his true subject. At any rate, he goes to the library and sets to work to make an exploration of the subject of the role of the railroad in the Civil War.

### ***Bibliography***

By using the card catalogue in his library and some of the general aids referred to on page 320, with some help from the reference librarian, he comes up with the following list of books and articles:

#### **BOOKS:**

##### ***Primary Sources***

Haupt, Herman. *Reminiscences of General Herman Haupt*. Milwaukee: Wright and Joys Co., Limited Autograph Edition, July, 1901.

Jacobs, M. *Notes on the Rebel Invasion of Maryland and Pennsylvania and the Battle of Gettysburg*. Gettysburg: Times Printing House, 1909.

*Order Book. Civil War. Military Railroads. General Orders, Instructions, and Reports.* n.p., n.d. (found at the Library Bureau of Railway Economics, Association of American Railroads, Washington, D. C.). Cited as “Order Book.”

*The War of the Rebellion. Official Records of Union and Confederate Armies.* Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902, Series 1, 53 vols.

*Secondary Sources*

Freeman, Douglas S. *R. E. Lee*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934-1936, 4 vols.

Turner, George Edgar. *Victory Rode the Rails*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1953.

**PERIODICALS:**

Weber, Thomas. Book review of *Victory Rode the Rails*, in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XL, No. 4 (March 1954), 742.

**MAPS:**

Map of United States Military Railroads, 1866 (to accompany reports of D. C. McCallum, 1861-1866). Located at Library Bureau of Railway Economics, Association of American Railroads, Washington, D. C.

(The student found many more books and articles, but these were the ones he actually got out and sampled or read through carefully. Note that he did not use all these sources in his complete draft.)

*Note-taking*

Here are some sample notes taken by our student:

Haupt urged Burnside to cross War of the  
the Rappahannock Rebellion  
Vol. 33, 789.

1. Supplies could be brought by water.
2. He would have an established rail center to fall back on at Falmouth or
3. to use for communication with Washington if he reached Richmond.

Haupt supplies Meade at Turner, Victory Rode  
Gettysburg the Rails, p. 280.

Haupt supplied enough materials to Meade in four days to allow him to take the offensive. The South was unable to do this for Lee in the winter of 1862-1863.

Ewell's route to Freeman, Douglas Southall,  
Gettysburg Lee's Lieutenants, New York:  
Charles Scribner's Sons,  
1944, 3 vols., III, 36.

"To Heidlersburg, on the road to Gettysburg,  
'Dick' Ewell made his way before sundown on  
June 30."

(Note that on this third card there is full bibliographical information. The first two cards could omit it, for they refer to works already mentioned in the bibliography, where full information is given.)

### ■ *Applications*

If you have already done the exercise on page 325, Chapter 13, you are ready to reduce your topic to a true subject. If you

have not done this exercise, turn back to it now; select a topic, and make a preliminary bibliography.

- I Take notes on your subject, following the suggestions outlined in Chapter 13, pages 325-28.
- II With the help of the notes you have assembled, fix upon the limited subject on which you will write.

### ***Outline***

When our student had finished his research in books and magazines, he had decided to narrow his subject to a discussion of the importance of railroads in one particular campaign, that which culminated at Gettysburg. So he jotted down the following scratch outline:

#### **SCRATCH OUTLINE**

The importance of the railroads in the Civil War can be illustrated by the Battle of Gettysburg and the events leading up to it.

Haupt's part in the Battle of Fredericksburg.

The Confederate army is forced to remain on the defensive because of the inefficiency of its railroad communications.

The next Federal offensive and the Battle of Chancellorsville.

Lee reorganizes his army and takes the offensive.

Lee's plan to cut the railroads connecting Washington with the rest of the Union.

Events that lead up to the Confederate failure at Gettysburg.

The problem of supplying Meade by railroads.

Haupt solves the problem.

Summary of Haupt's accomplishment.

### ***First draft***

Our student was aware that his scratch outline did not give him as clear an idea of the organization of the paper as might be desired. Still the scratch outline got down on paper many of the ideas that he wanted to deal with and he still hoped that in the actual process of writing, his ideas would become adequately clarified. At any rate, he decided to begin writing without going farther with his outline. Here are the first ten paragraphs of his paper.

#### **RAILROADS IN THE CIVIL WAR**

Railroads were used in the Crimean War, but the American Civil War was the first railroad war. Many historians studying the war ignore

the significance of the railroads. They get bogged down in battles, by which I mean the actual fighting or if they include them at all they include them in their passing mention of the industrial capacity of the North and South. The theme of this paper, on the other hand, is the strategic and tactical importance of the railroads in the campaigns of the Civil War by outlining their significance in the important period from the Battle of Fredericksburg to the Battle of Gettysburg. We live in an age of technology but we did not invent it, it is well to remember.

The story of Gettysburg begins in the fall of 1862 when General Ambrose E. Burnside, who replaced General McClellan after the Battle of Antietam, moved his army to Stratford Heights and Falmouth on the north bank of the Rappahannock River overlooking Fredericksburg. In shifting position, Burnside was following the advice of his transportation chief, Herman Haupt. Even though it had to be rebuilt Haupt favored using the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad to supply Burnside because it was a more protected road. On November 22, Haupt further advised Burnside to cross the Rappahannock, suggesting that supplies then could be carried by water, he would still have the railroad center at Falmouth to fall back on and he would have an open means of communication with Washington if he reached Richmond.<sup>1</sup> It is not known to what extent this dispatch influenced Burnside, but on December 13 he attacked Lee at Fredericksburg and was defeated. The two armies spent the rest of the winter watching each other across the river.

Burnside was able to attack because Haupt had provided him with enough supplies. On the other hand, Lee was unable to take the offensive during the winter of 1862-1863, even after the victory at Fredericksburg, because his men were too weak from lack of food and the animals lacked forage. Fifty miles away at Richmond there were plenty of supplies, but they could not be brought forward because of the inefficiency of the railroads.<sup>2</sup> Yet Lee was being supplied by the same railroad, a different section, as Burnside.

The Confederates were consequently forced to take the defensive and in the spring of 1863 General Hooker, who had replaced Burnside, began to prepare for an offensive. Haupt, in addition to meeting the daily demands of the Army of the Potomac, landed and made ready seventy cars of supplies, material, and prefabricated bridge trusses for the 'on to Richmond' movement.<sup>3</sup>

The ensuing Battle of Chancellorsville was a stalemate, but the Union forces suffered more physically and moralewise. The time was opportune for an offensive by the South, but again the transportation corps could not provide the necessary supplies, and forage was running

<sup>1</sup> *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington 1902) Series I, XXVIII, 789.

<sup>2</sup> Douglas S. Freeman, *Robert E. Lee* (New York 1931-1936) II, 493-94.

<sup>3</sup> Haupt's dispatch to Stanton, September 9, 1863, *Order Book* (n.p., n.d.).

out in the area of Fredericksburg Lee concluded his best alternative was to invade Pennsylvania, for he could gather his own supplies and forage there and he might be able to isolate Washington and give encouragement to the Peace Party which was gaining strength in the North <sup>4</sup>

After the Battle of Chancellorsville and the death of Jackson Lee reorganized his army into three corps with James Longstreet, Richard Ewell, and A P Hill in command of the first, second, and third corps, respectively Lee entered his most important battle with an untested, reorganized army The objective of the invasion of Pennsylvania was railroad centers whose destruction would cut Washington off from the north and south and this again ties into the main idea Ewell's corps was to move up the Shenandoah from Fredericksburg with Longstreet following him and with Stuart to the right of Longstreet as a screen Hill by remaining at Fredericksburg, would screen the rear, but when Ewell reached the Potomac River, Hill was to follow him, and Longstreet was to move westward into the Valley and then proceed northward leaving Stuart to defend the mountain passes and screen the right <sup>5</sup>

Once into Maryland Ewell was to destroy the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and then split up his force part heading to Harrisburg to destroy the Cumberland Valley Railroad and part moving toward York to destroy the Northern Central Longstreet was then to push forward to Havre de Grace and destroy the Pennsylvania Railroad main line and the great bridges over the Susquehanna River Washington would then be isolated <sup>6</sup>

Lee advanced according to schedule and on June 28, when General Meade replaced Hooker as commander of the Army of the Potomac, Ewell was only eighteen miles from Harrisburg and the Army of the Potomac was still around Frederick, Maryland Unfortunately Stuart became separated from Lee, who then did not know where the Army of the Potomac was, and when Meade began to move after Lee, the two armies unknowingly converged on Gettysburg Both armies were reorganized and untested and Lee who had given up his communications with Richmond was living off the land Meade did not give up his lines of communication, but he had to move so fast it became difficult to supply his army When the two armies met July 1, 2, and 3, they were in some ways evenly matched, and a writer like Douglas Freeman seems to argue that the main difference at Gettysburg was the tactical errors made

Perhaps the most telling fact was the reorganization of the Confederate Army and the attitude of the commanding generals Lee was

<sup>4</sup> M Jacobs *Notes on the Rebel Invasion of Maryland and Pennsylvania and the Battle of Gettysburg* (Gettysburg 1909) p 1

<sup>5</sup> Freeman, II, 33

<sup>6</sup> George Edgar Turner, *Victory Rode the Rails* (Indianapolis, 1953) p 273



used to giving discretionary orders to Jackson but the new commanders were used to explicit orders and lacked initiative. Several times they failed to act at crucial moments or failed to use their initiative. On July 1, Ewell and his division commanders were unwilling, after driving the enemy off Seminary Ridge, to attack Cemetery Hill which could have been easily taken since the Union Army had not yet arrived in full force. Even more disastrous, Longstreet delayed the assault ten hours, and the next day during that time the ridge was fully fortified by forces which were just arriving. The delay was due mainly to Longstreet's disgruntled mood caused by Lee's rejection of a flanking movement he had planned. Yet Lee should have been able to shock Longstreet out of his insubordination.<sup>7</sup>

Another factor in the outcome was that Lee had no reconnaissance without Stuart.<sup>8</sup> He was like a blind man at times. Another minor factor was the poor use of Confederate artillery. The principle of converging lines of fire was ignored as were several advantageous positions and vulnerable targets.<sup>9</sup>

### Rewriting

When the student had gotten this far, he stopped. He had become aware that his paper had lost direction. The last three paragraphs that he had written did not pertain to the thesis that he had meant to develop. A sentence like "Yet Lee should have been able to shock Longstreet out of his insubordination," touches upon a matter of interest to any one concerned with the Battle of Gettysburg, but it really has nothing to do with the role of the railroads. At this point, therefore, the student decided to go back and rethink his paper. To this end, he resolved to make a careful outline, in this instance, a sentence outline. He hoped that the process of working out a fairly elaborate and precise outline would enable him to see how much space he should give to the Confederate difficulties of command — if any; and how to relate this matter to his general thesis.

Before working out his sentence outline, however, our student turned back to the chapter on exposition and reread the various sections, including that on expository narration, for it was apparent that a discussion of the importance of the railroads in the Civil War would make use of expository methods, and that if he discussed a particular military campaign, narrative methods would also be involved. Here follows the student's sentence outline:

<sup>7</sup> Freeman, III, 147-50.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

## SENTENCE OUTLINE

*Thesis* A consideration of the Battle of Gettysburg and the events leading up to it reveals how important were the railroads in determining the strategy and the outcome of the Civil War

- I. The role of the railroads in the Civil War, a role which the historians have tended to slight, may be illustrated with the Gettysburg campaign
- II The chief events leading up to Gettysburg were powerfully determined by problems of rail supply
  - A. Burnside and Lee fought at Fredericksburg in December 1862 because Burnside's transportation chief, Haupt, had favored using the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad.
    - 1 He argued that this rail line was better protected, and that
    - 2 If Burnside could break through to Richmond, he would have an open means of communication with Washington
  - B Though victorious at Fredericksburg, Lee's inefficient rail supply prevented him from going over to the offensive
  - C. When in the spring of 1863 Lee defeated Hooker at Chancellorsville, lack of supplies and forage hampered his taking the offensive
    - 1 Supplies were low in the vicinity of Fredericksburg, and
    - 2 Inefficient rail service prevented them from being brought from more distant areas
- III The railroads were important in shaping Lee's plan to invade Pennsylvania
  - A. He hoped, by living off the country in Pennsylvania, to ease his own problem of supply
  - B He hoped to isolate Washington by cutting its rail connection.
    - 1 Ewell was first to destroy the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, and then to destroy the Cumberland Valley Railroad and the Northern Central
    - 2 Longstreet was to destroy the main line of the Pennsylvania Railroad at Havre de Grace and the bridges over the Susquehanna River
  - C Lee followed his plan and on June 28 when Meade replaced Hooker, Lee was to the west and Meade to the east of Gettysburg, where the two forces eventually met and brought on the battle
- IV. The contribution made by Haupt's management of the railroads becomes clear when one realizes how close the Confederates came, in spite of costly mistakes, to winning at Gettysburg
  - A. Various reasons have been alleged for Lee's failure, including
    - 1 His lack of adequate reconnaissance because of Stuart's absence
    2. The use of vague and discretionary orders which allowed laps and failures on the part of the corps commanders

3. Longstreet's tardiness in carrying out Lee's orders to attack.
4. Other tactical mistakes of various kinds.
- B. In spite of piecemeal rather than unified attack, the Confederate forces mounted an intense offensive which came close to winning.
- C. Since none of Meade's forces had supplies to fight a three-day battle, Meade's success in holding his ground depended heavily upon Haupt's ability to keep him supplied with food, ammunition, and equipment.
- V. Haupt's problem in supplying Meade's army in Pennsylvania was a difficult one.
  - A. He first had to make the proper diagnosis of Lee's intentions.
  - B. The one direct rail route from Baltimore to Gettysburg had been destroyed by Ewell.
  - C. The closest available rail route stopped at Westminster.
    1. The distance from Westminster to Gettysburg would have to be covered by wagon.
    2. The rail route lacked sidings, turntables, and watering stations.
    3. It could handle only four trains a day, whereas thirty were required.
- VI. Haupt's success in organizing railroad supply lines was the result not only of forethought but of brilliant improvisation.
  - A. He had previously stockpiled materials and tools for just such an emergency.
  - B. On the Western Maryland he used such expedients as
    1. Running the trains in convoys of five each.
    2. Running the trains backwards on the return trip.
    3. Replenishing water from streams by bucket brigades.
  - C. So successful was Haupt that by July 3, the Western Maryland's capacity had been increased tenfold.
  - D. Haupt also had his construction crews immediately start repairs on alternate rail lines to Gettysburg.
  - E. On July 5 Meade was actually being supplied beyond his daily needs.
- VII. The North was indeed fortunate in having in its service a man of Haupt's special genius.

### ■ *Application*

Write a sentence outline of the paper for which you have taken notes. (See pages 330-331.)

With his sentence outline before him, the student proceeded to redraft the first part of his paper and to go on to complete it. He

was happy to find, as he began to write, that the sentence outline substantially justified the first four paragraphs of his first draft. He did make a number of changes, however, as you will see by comparing the first four paragraphs of the two drafts (Most of the added matter and also of the transposed matter has been put in italics so that the reader can more easily locate the changes) Note also the changes made in paragraphs 5-9. Here the student had felt the need to compress material that was not really very relevant to his thesis. He was also attempting in these paragraphs to strengthen the argument for the importance of the railroads, and to find a better transition to his account of Haupt's extraordinary feat at Gettysburg. As you read the revised paper (which follows), observe the changes.

#### RAILROADS IN THE CIVIL WAR

(1) *Although railroads had been used in the Crimean War, the American Civil War was the first railroad war. It was the first time each side utilized an extensive rail system in a total war effort.* Many historians studying the war ignore the significance of the railroads or include them in their passing mention of the industrial capacity of the North and South. The theme of this paper asserts the strategic and tactical importance of the railroads in the campaigns of the Civil War by outlining their significance in the important period from the Battle of Fredericksburg to the Battle of Gettysburg.

(2) The story of Gettysburg *really* begins in the fall of 1862 when General Ambrose E. Burnside, who *had* replaced General McClellan after the Battle of Antietam, moved his army to Stratford Heights and Falmouth on the north bank of the Rappahannock River overlooking Fredericksburg. In shifting *his* position, Burnside was following the advice of his transportation chief Herman Haupt. *Because the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad was relatively easy to protect*, Haupt favored using it to supply Burnside *even though it had to be rebuilt*. On November 22 Haupt advised Burnside to cross the Rappahannock, suggesting that supplies then could be carried by water, *that if unsuccessful, Burnside would still have the railroad center at Falmouth to fall back on, and that if he did break through to Richmond, he would have an open means of communication with Washington*.<sup>1</sup> It is not known to what extent this dispatch influenced Burnside, *but in any case it was the duty of Burnside to judge Haupt's advice in the over all military situation. Burnside must take the responsibility for the brutal defeat he suffered when, on December 13, he attacked Lee at Fredericksburg.* The two armies spent the rest of the winter watching each other across the river.

<sup>1</sup> *Wa of the Rebellion: Official Records of Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, 1902), Series 1, XXXIII, 789.

(3) Burnside was able to attack because Haupt had provided him with enough supplies. Lee, on the other hand, was unable to take the offensive during the winter of 1862-1863, even after the victory at Fredericksburg, because his men were too weak from lack of food and the animals lacked forage. Only fifty miles away at Richmond there were plenty of supplies, but they could not be brought forward because of the inefficiency of the rail lines.<sup>2</sup> Yet Lee was being supplied by the same railroad — though a different section of it, of course — as that which served Burnside.

(4) The Confederates were consequently forced to remain upon the defensive, and in the spring of 1863, General Hooker, who had replaced Burnside, began to prepare another offensive. Haupt, in addition to meeting the daily demands of the Army of the Potomac, landed and made ready seventy cars of supplies, material and prefabricated bridge trusses for the 'on to Richmond' movement.<sup>3</sup> Hooker advanced, and was badly mauled by Lee and Jackson at the Battle of Chancellorsville. The time was again opportune for an offensive by the South, but again the transportation corps could not provide the necessary supplies, and forage was running out in the area of Fredericksburg. The rich countryside of Pennsylvania looked like a promising source of supplies.

(5) Lee's choice of route for the invasion was thus to a considerable extent dictated to him by the poor shape of the railroads on which he depended for much of his supplies. But railroads also figured in another way in his plans. He meant to achieve the isolation of Washington by severing the railroad lines that connected it with the north, west, and south. To cut off and seize the Northern capital would have immediate political advantage, by giving encouragement to the Peace Party which was then gaining strength in the North.<sup>4</sup>

(6) The plan was for Lee's army, which had been reorganized after the Battle of Chancellorsville, to make the invasion in three corps. Ewell's corps was to move up the Shenandoah Valley from Fredericksburg with Longstreet's corps following him, and with Stuart and his cavalry flanking the right of Longstreet and acting as a screen. Hill's corps, by remaining at Fredericksburg, would protect the rear, but when Ewell reached the Potomac River, Hill was to follow him, and Longstreet was to move westward into the Shenandoah Valley and then proceed northward, leaving Stuart's cavalry to defend the mountain passes and to furnish a screen to the right flank.<sup>5</sup>

(7) Once into Maryland, Ewell was to destroy the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and then split up his force, one part heading for Harrisburg to destroy the Cumberland Valley Railroad and the other moving toward York to destroy the Northern Central. Longstreet was

<sup>2</sup> Douglas S. Freeman, *R. E. Lee* (New York, 1934-1936), II, 493-94.

<sup>3</sup> Haupt's dispatch to Stanton, September 9, 1863, *Order Book* (n.p., n.d.).

<sup>4</sup> M. Jacobs, *Notes on the Rebel Invasion of Maryland and Pennsylvania and the Battle of Gettysburg* (Gettysburg, 1909), p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Freeman, II, 33.

then to push forward to Havre de Grace and destroy *the main line* of the Pennsylvania Railroad and the great bridges over the Susquehanna River. Washington would then be isolated <sup>6</sup>

(8) Lee advanced according to schedule and when General Meade replaced Hooker on June 28, *Lee's forces were well up into Pennsylvania to the west and north of Gettysburg while the main Federal army was still around Frederick, Maryland, to the east, between Lee and his ultimate objective, Washington* Neither force had a clear notion of where the other was and small detachments, accidentally coming into contact at Gettysburg, brought on the battle there. The battle began blind

(9) *The Battle of Gettysburg has for nearly a century held the interest of military historians. Various reasons have been advanced to account for Lee's repulse in this great struggle which probably proved to be the turning point of the whole war. In advancing the notion here that Haupt's ability to supply Meade was a decisive factor, I am not trying to come up with the full answer to a difficult question. I am not forgetting that Stuart's absence with the cavalry put out Lee's eyes,<sup>7</sup> or that Lee's army in its new organization was largely untested, or that Lee's orders were too vague or left too much to the discretion of field commanders, or that Longstreet's notorious delay in launching the attack Lee had ordered almost amounted to insubordination.<sup>8</sup> In fact, so much went wrong that the remarkable thing is that the Confederates were able to mount so intensive an offensive and come so close to victory. But the very narrowness of the margin between victory and defeat itself stresses the importance of Haupt's contribution. Had Meade's army been seriously weakened by a lack of supplies, it might not have managed to hold firm.*

[From this point on the treatment is new.]

(10) General Haupt took charge of the railroads in Maryland and Pennsylvania on June 28, the same day that Meade replaced Hooker. The problem that confronted him was a formidable one. Meade's army had moved in four days from the Potomac to Gettysburg and some of the troops arrived on Cemetery Ridge after long hours of marching. For an unexpected, intense, three day battle Haupt had to supply Meade's army in a position picked by accident and over rail lines the enemy had already damaged. To cap the climax, just as he was about to go to Pennsylvania, he was unexplainably delayed by the War Department.<sup>9</sup>

(11) When he was released from Washington, he hurried to Harrisburg but was detoured through Philadelphia because Ewell had already destroyed part of the direct route. He arrived there the evening of June 30, and Tom Scott, district manager for the Pennsylvania Rail-

<sup>6</sup> George Edgar Turner, *Victory Rode the Rails* (Indianapolis, 1953), p. 273.

<sup>7</sup> Freeman, III, 147.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 147-50.

<sup>9</sup> Turner, p. 276.

road, reported the enemy had withdrawn from the region of Harrisburg toward Gettysburg. Scott, who had organized his own company of railroad scouts to protect his lines, thought the Army of Northern Virginia was withdrawing; but Haupt realized they were concentrating their forces to meet Meade and that there would probably be a battle at Gettysburg unless Meade altered his course. Late that night Haupt headed for Baltimore. The one rail route which went directly to Gettysburg had been destroyed by Ewell. The closest available rail route was from Baltimore to Westminster and thence by wagon to Gettysburg. This road was only twenty-eight miles long, but unfortunately there were no sidings, no turntables, no watering stations, and little wood available. Thirty trains would be needed a day; and the road could only handle four at the most, two each way.<sup>10</sup>

(12) On July 1, Haupt arrived in Westminster and found chaos. Supplies were trickling in and hundreds of Meade's wagons were collecting there. Haupt had, literally, to hide from the crowd, but in several minutes he had devised a plan and before returning to Baltimore had sent several hurried telegrams. Within a few hours his construction corps began to arrive in Baltimore from Alexandria, with buckets, tools, material, and wood, supplies which Haupt had stockpiled in Alexandria for just such an emergency. Impressed rolling stock also began to accumulate in the Baltimore yards.<sup>11</sup>

(13) On July 1, trains began to roll over the Western Maryland line to Westminster, the day Meade was hurrying to reinforce the two corps who then were holding Cemetery Ridge. None of Meade's forces had supplies to fight a three-day battle. The supply trains ran in convoys of five each, at eight-hour intervals. Each convoy had time to cover the distance, unload supplies, and return with wounded before the next convoy, loaded and waiting in the Baltimore yards, pulled out. Haupt had persuaded the Quartermaster Department to supply enough men so that when the trains arrived in Westminster every car was unloaded simultaneously and then reloaded with wounded. The trains were run backwards and filled with water from streams by bucket brigades. In addition to these crews, repair crews were placed at intervals along the route to check for and repair weak places, for the road bed and track were not strong enough to handle the increased load of traffic. Haupt's men were aware of the crisis and worked like beavers, so by July 3, fifteen hundred tons were being carried daily. The capacity of the road had been increased tenfold.<sup>12</sup>

(14) The great number of men involved in this operation had been supplied by Haupt, as had all the material. He even supplied the train crews. However, he did not limit his activity to the Western Maryland. He assigned a number of men from his construction corps to work on

<sup>10</sup> Haupt's dispatch to Stanton.

<sup>11</sup> Turner, p. 279.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

the Northern Central and York and Cumberland which ran directly to Gettysburg. Ewell had destroyed nineteen bridges and miles of track on this route.<sup>13</sup> Haupt, however, realized that while the road could not be made ready for the immediate battle, it might be needed later. If the Union forces were victorious, it could easily be able, to provide enough supplies for an offensive against the demoralized forces of Lee and could remove the wounded so the army could move forward quickly. In case of defeat it would facilitate retreat. Haupt's crews began work on the afternoon of July 1, and by the afternoon of July 4, the day Lee was retreating, the road was open to within fifteen miles of Gettysburg and completed just after midnight.<sup>14</sup> The wounded were now carried out by this route and supplies brought in through Westminster.

(15) On July 5, Haupt was supplying Meade with supplies beyond his daily needs, and it was on this day that Haupt urged Meade to follow up his advantage. The Army of the Potomac now had an established supply line, and back in Virginia the rail lines would be badly damaged. Meade would not advance and Haupt returned to Washington and tried to get a preemptory order.<sup>15</sup> This attempt failed, and by July 14 Lee was back in the Shenandoah.

(16) General Haupt had performed an amazing feat at Gettysburg. It is further from Baltimore to Gettysburg than from Richmond to Fredericksburg, but Haupt had done in four days of battle what the South could not do in four months of peace before Chancellorsville: to supply the army with enough provisions and material to take the offensive.<sup>16</sup>

(17) The North was fortunate to find a man of Haupt's caliber who had the ability to utilize the potential of railroads in wartime. In one and three quarter years Haupt developed precedents for the operation of railroads in time of war, a problem never before faced by anyone, which still form the basis for the operation of railroads in war by the United States almost a hundred years later.

Haupt was an engineering genius who helped sustain mediocre Union commanders in Virginia and who performed an outstanding feat of transportation on the Western Maryland Railroad during the Gettysburg campaign.<sup>17</sup>

A study of the operations of General Haupt or of the use of railroads in other campaigns and under other men would show clearly that the railroads had a decisive effect in many of the campaigns of the Civil War.

<sup>13</sup> Haupt's dispatch to Stanton

<sup>14</sup> Turner, p. 280

<sup>15</sup> Herman Haupt, *Reminiscences of General Herman Haupt* (Milwaukee, 1901) Limited Autograph Edition, p. 73

<sup>16</sup> Turner, p. 280

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Weber, book review of *Victory Rode the Rails*, in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XL (March 1954), 742



At this point the student has before him a completed draft of his paper. The first section of it actually represents, as we have seen, a rewriting — a second draft. Let us stop and review that part which is a second draft, and try to follow the logic of some of the changes.

The main change has already been mentioned — the reorganization to correct the diffuse analysis of the causes of the Confederate defeat and to put the focus back on the subject of the railroads. We can see how competently in paragraph 9 the student has done this. The military aspects of the occasion are finally related to the point of the paper: "But the very narrowness of the margin between victory and defeat itself stresses the importance of Haupt's contribution" — and, of course, the importance of the railroad.

To turn to smaller concerns, we can see clear improvements in the first paragraph. The rewriting of the first sentence, with the remark about the Crimean War now put into an introductory subordinate clause introduced by the concessive *although*, sharpens the focus on the Civil War. The new second sentence makes precise what had been vaguely implied by the phrase "railroad war" in the original first sentence. The student has also sharpened his meaning by getting rid of the sentence beginning "They [the historians] get bogged down in battles, by which. . . ." The metaphor of "boggling down" in battles is a poor one, both trite and inaccurate, and the fumbling explanation beginning "by which I mean . . ." doesn't help matters. In the rewriting, the student has compressed and stated more accurately his view of the historians. And he has dropped the last sentence of the paragraph, which had set up a distraction from the main idea of the paper.

If we jump ahead to paragraph 4 we see some clear gains in clarity of organization. But there are gains of another sort in the revision of the clause, "but the Union forces suffered more physically and moralewise." For one thing it is not quite clear what the student means by "suffered more physically." Does he mean that the Union army endured more casualties? Probably, but there is still a confusing margin of other possibilities of meaning. As for the word *moralewise*, it is an example of the current practice of tacking *wise* on to any word — *insurancewise*, *healthwise*, *housewise* — to make a series of barbarous and superfluous coined words.

In the final draft of the paper, which is not given here, the student made several further revisions. Among them was a revision of paragraph 13. Quite properly he was dissatisfied with the structure of that paragraph. On reflection he saw that the first two sentences

do not belong to a paragraph dealing with the details of the supply system. So he rewrote them and attached them to the previous paragraph as a kind of climax:

. . . rolling stock also began to accumulate in the Baltimore yards. On July 1, the very day when Meade was hurrying reinforcements to the two corps then holding Cemetery Ridge, the first train rolled over the Western Maryland line to Westminster. It was none too soon, for none of Meade's forces had supplies for the bitter three-day contest which lay ahead.

The supply trains ran in convoys. . . .

## ■ Applications

- I Reread the brief comments above upon the student's revision of his paper. Can you account for the changes which have not been discussed there? Has the theme anywhere been altered for the worse? Can you suggest further changes?
- 1 In paragraph 9 we find the sentence: "In fact, so much went wrong that the remarkable thing is that the Confederates were able to mount so intensive an offensive and come so close to victory." In his last version the student made two changes in the sentence. Can you guess why? What changes would you make?
- 2 Near the end of paragraph 13 occurs the sentence: "Haupt's men were aware of the crisis and worked like beavers, so by July 3, fifteen hundred tons were being carried daily." What do you think of this sentence? If you do not like it, how would you revise it?
- 3 What do you think of the unity of paragraph 14? Is there material in it which should go back into the previous paragraph? If you think so, try to revise the end of paragraph 13 and the beginning of the next. Keep in mind the question of transition.
- 4 Go back to the first paragraph of the paper, in the second version. What is the promised subject of the theme? Now look at the last paragraph. Is it properly geared to the subject, or does it dwell too much on the personal achievement of General Haupt? Try a revision of the paragraph.
- II As a further exercise in critical analysis, turn to the sample research paper which follows page 357. Study it with the following questions in mind:

- 1 Does the paper have a sound, logical structure? Does it fulfill the intention stated in the thesis sentence?
  - 2 Is the sentence outline of the paper adequate? Can you suggest ways of improving it?
  - 3 Are the footnote references sufficient? Are there any places without documentation where you feel it is needed? Are there any unnecessary footnotes?
  - 4 Are footnotes and bibliography proper in form?
  - 5 Are all the paragraphs unified and coherent? Are the transitions between paragraphs satisfactory? Can you suggest improvements in any paragraphs or transitions?
  - 6 Do you find any sentences that need improvement grammatically or rhetorically?
  - 7 What is the tone of the paper? Do you feel that this tone is appropriate to the subject? If not, how could it be improved?
  - 8 Can you make any other suggestions for improving the paper?
- III** Write the first draft of the paper for which you have made an outline. (See page 348.) Now begins the really serious work: revision. Study your paper with reference to the following considerations:
- 1 Have you stated the intention of your paper? If not, is it clear by implication? Does the end really fulfill the intention?
  - 2 Does the body of the paper form a logical sequence? That is, does it present evidence and argument, if such are appropriate, in an orderly fashion? Does it give narrative, if its business is to give narrative, in such a way as to indicate cause and effect, and to give an impression of meaningful climax? And so on. Does the logical sequence, of whatever sort it happens to be, lead continuously from the first paragraph to the last? Are there any distracting digressions?
  - 3 Are there clearly defined transitions from paragraph to paragraph?
  - 4 Are the paragraphs organized so that they exhibit unity and coherence?
  - 5 Check sentence structure, agreement of subjects and verbs, the reference of pronouns, the sequence of tenses, the position of modifiers. Check punctuation.
  - 6 Have you any examples of metaphorical language? If so,

are they fresh and apt? If not, try again. Do you find any points where some comparison might help?

- 7 To whom are you addressing your paper? What is your attitude toward your audience? What do you expect to be the attitude of the audience to your subject? What is your own attitude? In the light of these questions, do you feel that the tone of your paper is satisfactory?
- 8 Read your paper out loud – or better, have someone read it to you. Do you find any rhythms that are jarring or monotonous? If so, try to determine the reason. Perhaps your sentences tend to be of the same length and structure. Or perhaps they are so sprawling that the ear cannot grasp them. Try shifting the elements for variety and emphasis. Try to relate the logic of what you are saying to what your ear instinctively indicates about the rhythm.

After the first complete revision lay the paper away for a day or two. Then come back to it. Try again to improve it. The writer, whether novice or veteran, must not become weary in well doing. Good writing is mostly rewriting. The sweat is worth as much as the inspiration.

### **SAMPLE RESEARCH PAPER**

The following student paper is included not as a model of excellence but as representative of the ordinary undergraduate endeavor. The student is urged to criticize it and to improve upon it if he can. The paper also demonstrates one possible form in which a research paper can be submitted to the instructor.

JOSEPH BARETTI: HIS INFLUENCE ON  
ITALIAN LITERATURE AND HIS FRIENDSHIP  
WITH SAMUEL JOHNSON

by

Oretta D. Small

page should  
include all  
information  
paired by the  
instructor

Upsala College

May 25, 1960

#### SENTENCE OUTLINE

Thesis: Joseph Baretti, a minor figure in Boswell's Life of Samuel Johnson, deserves to be better known for his literary work in English and Italian, for his close relationship with Johnson, and for his unusual personality.

◀ Central idea or thesis stated in one sentence.

I. Joseph Baretti plays only a minor part in Boswell's Life, but he is nevertheless a person of some importance in eighteenth-century literature.

- A. Boswell and Baretti were not on good terms.
- B. Baretti's writing in English was not as important as that in Italian.
- C. Baretti was an important critic in Italy.
- D. He published some well-known works in English.
- E. He brought Johnson's ideas and enthusiasm for English literature to Italy.

II. Baretti spent his early life in Northern Italy, but while still a young man decided to try his fortune in England.

- A. He was born in Turin, Italy, in 1719.
- B. He spent his early life in Venice and Milan.
- C. In 1751 he went to England.
  - 1. He began teaching Italian and writing in English.
  - 2. In 1758 he published The Italian Library.
  - 3. In 1760 he published a highly successful revision of an English-Italian dictionary, for which Johnson wrote the dedication.
  - 4. He became acquainted with Johnson in 1752 or a little later.

III. In 1760, Baretti, a success in England, returned to Italy to re-establish there his literary career.

◀ Pages before to numbered with small Roman numerals.

- A. He wanted to free Italian literature from dead "neo-classicism."
- B. His attempts at reform were frustrated by censorship.
  - 1. A travel book was suppressed because it criticized the Portuguese.
  - 2. After two years of publication, his literary journal La Frusta Letteraria (The Literary Whip) was also suppressed.
  - 3. Barretti, disillusioned, decided to return to England.
- C. Barretti was an influential critic in Italy.
  - 1. His criticism reflects Johnson's ideas.
  - 2. He brought enthusiasm for Shakespeare to Italy.
  - 3. Hall, Foligno, and Gardner all testify to his refreshing if rather extreme views on literature.
- IV. Barretti's rather violent literary criticism reflects his violent personality.
  - A. Boswell and he were not on friendly terms.
  - B. He once had to stand trial for murder.
    - 1. He killed a man in self-defense.
    - 2. Several distinguished men, including Johnson, testified on his behalf.
    - 3. He was acquitted.
- V. Barretti and Johnson were close but mutually critical friends, both in their literary and personal lives.
  - A. Johnson's influence is seen in many of Barretti's works in English.
    - 1. Johnson wrote a preface, dedication, or first paragraph for six of Barretti's works.

2. Barretti and Johnson worked together on an edition of Zachariah Williams' Longitude.
3. Barretti used Johnson's writing in his Italian grammar.
- B. Barretti and Johnson respected and liked one another but understood each other's shortcomings.
  1. Barretti called Johnson "a bear."
  2. Barretti described Johnson's unpleasant personal habits.
  3. Johnson disparaged Barretti's opinion of himself as "one of the best" of men.
  4. On the occasion of Barretti's leaving the Thrales' employ, Johnson described to Mrs. Thrale Barretti's cynical, rude character.
  5. Barretti eventually quarreled with Johnson.
- VI. Barretti's last years were spent in poverty and obscurity.
  - A. He was dependent upon the charity of friends,
  - B. He died in May, 1789.
- VII. Barretti deserves greater fame than he has been accorded in the history of English literature.



JOSEPH BARETTI: HIS INFLUENCE ON ITALIAN LITERATURE  
AND HIS FRIENDSHIP WITH SAMUEL JOHNSON

Joseph Baretti plays only a minor part in Boswell's Life of Samuel Johnson, although he was a friend of Johnson for more than thirty years. There are perhaps two reasons for this. One may be that Boswell and Baretti did not get along well -- at one time they were virtually enemies, in fact. The other is that Baretti's writing in English consisted largely of translations of French and Italian works.<sup>1</sup> His creative work, his literary criticism, he did chiefly in Italian, his native tongue. But Baretti should not be dismissed merely as a minor literary figure. In his native Italy, he was a critic of some importance, and in England he published a highly respected English-Italian dictionary and a variety of other literary works. Through his friendship with Johnson, and his knowledge of English, he brought Johnsonian ideas and enthusiasm for English literature to Italy in the late eighteenth century.

Joseph Baretti was born in Turin, Italy, in 1719. He lived most of his early life in Venice and Milan.<sup>2</sup> In 1751 he went to London where he made his living teaching Italian and writing.<sup>3</sup> In 1758 he published The Italian Library, an introduction for English readers to the leading Italian writers, and in 1760 he brought out a Dictionary of the English and Italian Languages,

<sup>1</sup>For a full listing of Baretti's writings see "Giuseppe Baretti" in Dictionary of National Biography, 1921-22, I, 1100-02.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 1098.

<sup>3</sup>Lacy Collison-Morley, Giuseppe Baretti (London, 1909), p. 99.

note signaled  
superior (above-  
line) figure.

Introductory  
paragraph states  
central idea or  
thesis that paper  
will attempt to  
prove.

DEVELOP

NO NO

NO NO

note refers  
to work cited  
immediately above.

which was a revision of an earlier publication, but largely Barretti's own work. It was a considerable success and went through many editions. Evidence of the closeness of Barretti's friendship with Johnson at the time is that the dedication was written by Johnson himself.<sup>4</sup> The two men had become acquainted some years earlier, possibly as early as 1752, through Mrs. Lennox, a literary lady to whom Barretti taught Italian and whom Johnson greatly admired.<sup>5</sup>

Once the dictionary was safely launched, Barretti returned to his native land in 1760. When he got back to Italy, his ideas were more developed, and he began to attack the literature that prevailed there. This literature that he attacked is called "neo-classical." But, unlike his publishing experiences in England, he had little luck in his endeavors. The first volume of a narrative of his journey from England to Italy was suppressed because the Portuguese minister objected to Barretti's criticism of Portugal.<sup>6</sup>

Barretti then turned to periodical writing, which was becoming popular in Italy as part of the reform movement in Italian literature in which Barretti was a leading figure.<sup>7</sup> On October 1, 1763, he published the first issue of La Frusta Letteraria (The Literary Whip), a literary journal in which he lashed out at the narrow conventions of contemporary literature. In the manner of Addison's Spectator, Barretti created an "editor" for his periodical, "Aristarco Scannabue," an old soldier with a wooden

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 101, 106-07.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 80-82.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>7</sup>Edmund G. Gardner, Italian Literature (London, 1927), p. 53.

leg, who angrily attacked "all the wretched, clumsy moderns who are daily scribbling coarse comedies, dull tragedies, childish criticisms, etc."<sup>8</sup>

Baretti's greatest campaign was directed against the "Arcadians," a shallow literary movement that, as its name suggests, was based upon the pastoral tradition. Its members took the traditional names of shepherds and shepherdesses, and "its basic literary principle was that poetic excellence lay in skillful imitation rather than in loftiness of content. . ."<sup>9</sup>

After two years of publication, Scannabus's invective proved too much for the Venetian authorities, and once again Baretti was silenced by censorship.<sup>10</sup> Baretti, disillusioned and frustrated by the repressive atmosphere of his native land, returned once more to England, which he now decided to make his permanent home, and where he lived until his death in 1789.<sup>11</sup>

One issue of the Frusta, quoted by Baretti's biographer, Collison-Morley, reflects clearly Johnson's influence on his friend's literary views. In the ninth issue, Baretti reviews an "Essay on Scotch Literature" by a critic named Denina, who held that Scottish literature was much superior to English. Baretti scathingly denounces this argument and points out that William Robertson, an historian cited by Denina, was an imitator of

<sup>8</sup>Collison-Morley, pp. 154-55.

<sup>9</sup>Robert A. Hall, Jr., A Short History of Italian Literature (Ithaca, 1951), p. 295.

<sup>10</sup>Collison-Morley, p. 168.

<sup>11</sup>Charles Frederick Harrold, "The Italian in Streatham Place," The Sewanee Review, XXXVIII (April-June 1930), 168.

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Johnson.<sup>12</sup> Johnson himself believed this, as Boswell tells us in his Life.<sup>13</sup> Johnson's unfavorable views on Scotland and the Scots are well known. Baretti probably also learned from Johnson the enthusiasm for Shakespeare which de Sanctis says he brought to Italy.<sup>14</sup>

Despite his lack of success in Italy, Baretti was not without influence on Italian literature. He was one of the critics who "served to clear the air [of stale tradition] and disencumber the scene for later, more positive achievements." Baretti also "helped diffuse the knowledge of foreign literatures in Italy, and at the same time fiercely opposed all foreign imitation and innovations." His chief limitation, apparently, was his essentially "destructive and negative" point of view. According to Hall, no literary work ever lived up to the ideals he set, and he even disliked Dante.<sup>15</sup>

Other critics take a more affirmative view of Baretti's contributions to Italian literature. Cesare Foligno gives him credit for introducing important foreign literary works to the Italians, and, calling him "the most pugnacious critic of his time," says, "Even when his judgment was at fault what he said provoked discussion and served a useful purpose."<sup>16</sup> And

◀ Quotation carefully introduced into text; editorial addition indicated by brackets.

◀ Footnote at end of paragraph gives source of all information and quotations in paragraph.

<sup>12</sup>Collison-Morley, pp. 161-65.

<sup>13</sup>James Boswell, The Life of Samuel Johnson, ed. George Birkbeck Hill (New York, 1921), III, 196.

<sup>14</sup>Francesco de Sanctis, History of Italian Literature (New York, 1931), II, 855. For a full-scale analysis of the influence of Johnson on Baretti's literary opinions see Catharina J. A. Lubbers-van der Brugge, Johnson and Baretti, Groningen Studies in English (Groningen, 1951), Vol. 2.

<sup>15</sup>Hall, p. 313.

<sup>16</sup>Cesare Foligno, Epochs of Italian Literature (Oxford, 1920), pp. 43-44.

◀ Footnote gives additional reference to subject touched briefly in text.

according to Edmund Gardner; Barretti, "Though sometimes perverse in his judgments . . . introduced a virile spirit into Italian literary criticism in a robust modern style."<sup>17</sup>

In part Barretti's literary opinions seem to reflect his own rather irritable personality. The references to him in Boswell's Life are perhaps colored by Boswell's personal dislike of Barretti, a dislike which was reciprocated by Barretti.<sup>18</sup> But there is no doubt that Barretti had a violent disposition. In 1769 he even had to stand trial for murder. He killed a man with his pocket knife while being attacked by a street mob.

Two weeks after the murder the trial was held. Barretti in his own defense explained that it was a custom on the Continent to carry knives like his because they were not included in the table furnishings. Then a distinguished array of character witnesses took the stand on his behalf: Topham Beauclerk, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke, Oliver Goldsmith, and Mr. Halifax all attested to Barretti's probity. Johnson's testimony, quoted by Harrold, is particularly interesting, in view of what we know about Barretti's stormy disposition:

I believe I began to be acquainted with Mr. Barretti about the year '53 or '54. I have been intimate with him. He is a man of literature and a very studious man of great diligence. He gets his living by study. . . . A man that I never knew to be otherwise than peaceable, and a man that I take to be rather timorous.

<sup>17</sup>Gardner, p. 53.

<sup>18</sup>Evidence of this mutual distaste turns up in footnotes to the Hill edition of Boswell's Life. Barretti wrote in his copy of the Piozzi Letters (I, 216), "Boswell is not quite right-headed in my humble opinion." (Boswell, III, 154, note 1.) And Dr. Campbell noted in his diary entry for April 1, 1775, that "Boswell and Barretti . . . are mortal foes . . ." (Boswell, II, 11-12, note 3.)

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Johnson also testified to Barretti's extreme nearsightedness.<sup>19</sup> He "gave his evidence in a slow, deliberate, and distinct manner, which was uncommonly impressive. It is well known that Mr. Barretti was acquitted."<sup>20</sup>

The knife was returned, and Barretti continued to use it as table knife at dinner while amusing his fellow diners with the story of how he had killed Morgan.<sup>21</sup>

After Barretti's trial, he and Johnson continued on the same familiar terms, in both their personal and literary lives. In six of Barretti's works published in England there is a preface, dedication, or first paragraph written by Johnson. Barretti and Johnson also worked together on an edition of Zachariah Williams' Legislator (1755) in which Barretti's Italian translation and Johnson's English essay are printed on opposite pages. Barretti's Grammar of the Italian Language (1760) contains numerous sentences taken from "the works of my friend and instructor, Mr. Samuel Johnson. . ."<sup>22</sup>

◀ Transitional phrase introduces new section of paper.

But the relationship between these two men, although a close one, did not consist merely of mutual admiration. Boswell quotes a conversation at his own dinner table when Barretti and the Earl of Eglintoun were among the guests. The Earl "regretted that Johnson had not been educated with more refinement,

<sup>19</sup>Harrold, pp. 161-64.

<sup>20</sup>Boswell, II, 112.

<sup>21</sup>Harrold, p. 164.

<sup>22</sup>Allen T. Hazen, Samuel Johnson's Prefaces and Dedications (New Haven, 1937), pp. 5-7.

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# Index

- Abbreviations: in footnotes and bibliography, 336-37
- Absolute constructions, 238
- Abstract words: *see* Diction
- Action: analysis and propositions of, 115-25; as meaningful sequence of events, 193-201, 213; propositions of fact or of, 108; as series of events in narration, 191-93
- Adjectives: derivation of, 257-59; in description, 177; *see also* Diction, Language, Modifiers, Words
- Adverbs: in description, 178-79; *see also* Action, Diction, Modifiers, Words
- Analogy: 255-56, 282, 286; induction by, 134-38; *see also* Metaphor
- Analysis: in argument, 154-59; causal, 92-101; and classification compared, 80-81; developed, by governing idea, 84-85; in expository narrative, 88-92; functional, 85-88; of a generalized descriptive type, 83-84; method of, dependent on interest, 81-82; as method of exposition, 80-101; of parts of structure, 80-81; of a process, 88-101; and propositions of action, 115-25; and propositions of fact, 114-15; and technical (or expository) description, 82-84
- Argument: acceptable authority in, 128-30; admissible evidence in, 125-30; analysis of a paper in, 120-24; and common ground of reason, 104-06; demands of diction in, 254; extended and deduction in, 154-60; the issue in, 113-14; propositions underlying, 107-08; and reason, 103-04; on what it is about, and not about, 106-07; *see also* Analysis, Class, Conflict, Issue, Proposition, Reasoning
- Association: confused with cause, 95; metaphorical, 274; power of, to control meanings, 249-50, 263-66
- Audience: *gn.*, 49-50, 74, 130, 162-63, 291-92, 294-95, 308-10; *see also* Occasion
- Authority: opinion of, as evidence, 128-30
- Begging the question, 151-52
- Beginning: absence of any formula for, 14-15; of a narrative (exposition), 198-99; problem of making a, 9-16; *see also* Discourse, Exposition, Introduction
- Bibliography: and footnotes, the form of, 333-38; research paper, 320-25, 337-38; specimen index card for, 324; term paper, 340-41
- Body or middle: of discourse, 15; of narration, 199-200
- Caricature: 172*n.*; *see also* Dominant Impression
- Causal analysis, 92-101
- Cause: in analytical exposition, 93; circumstances conditioning, 93-94; complex, 96-97; conditions controlling, 95-96; as determined by interest, 94; a final caution on, 97; negative tests of, 97; reasoning about, 94-97; *see also* Causal analysis, Event
- Clarity: and rhythm, as aspects of style, 311-12



- Class deductive reasoning by, 139-47, for purpose of classification, 60 63, for purpose of definition, 45 47, for purpose of illustration, 66 69, *see also* Classification, Reasoning
- Classification in deductive reasoning, 139 47, as function of interest, 62 63, as a method of exposition, 60 66, requirements of a scheme of, 62 63, schematized examples of, 61 66, systems, simple and complex, 61 62, 64 66, uses of, in exposition, 63 66, *see also* Class, Genus, Reasoning, Species
- Cliches 267 73, deliberate use of, for tone, 297, *see also* Diction
- Coherence distinguished from unity, 20, through overall organization, 20-24, of paragraph, 223 25, through repetition, 24, through set phrases and words, 24 25, through transition, 24 25
- Comparison and contrast interest a factor in significant, 73 74, metaphorical, 286 90 as a method of exposition, 72 80, purpose a factor in systematic, 74 75, ways of organizing material for, 75 80
- Complement inner and outer of verb, 231 32
- Complication as middle of narrative, 199 200, 203 05
- Conclusion of a narrative, 200 01, reasoning from premise to 139 50, and what to avoid in, 16, *see also* Denouement, Premise
- Concrete words and metaphor, 275, *see also* Diction
- Conflict as generative of argument, 102 03, 104 07
- Connotation and denotation, 249 50
- Coordination and subordination grammatical, 241 43
- Dangling phrases, 237 38
- Deduction and extended argument, 154 60, and reasoning by classes, 139 47, *see also* Argument, Induction, Reasoning
- Definition in argument, 108 09, 139 40, circular, caution against, 50, classifying process in, 45 48, colored by tone, 298 99 and common ground, 48 50 as dictionary meaning, 256 59 as an equation of convertible terms, 43 45, extended, 51 60, as limiting term, 42, as a method of exposition, 42 60, *see also* Identification
- Denotation and connotation, 249 50, metaphorical, 274
- Denouement as narrative end, 200 01, 204 06
- Description 163 89 choice of words in, 177 79, 177n, 254, the dominant impression in, 172 79, generalized, 84 85, as giving interpretation, feeling, and mood, 172 74, and other kinds of discourse, 170 72, paragraphing in, 224, selection of detail in, 174 77, suggestive, 82 83, 165 70, suggestive, and the senses, 167 69, technical, 165 67, 169 70, technical (or expository), and analysis, 82 84, texture and pattern in, 179 89
- Diction 249 73, abstract general, 251 54, as clichés, 266 73, colloquial, 260 63, concrete specific, 251 54, 270, as creator of tone, 299, dictionary derivations of, 256 59, formal and informal, 260 63, as jargon, 268 73, misuse of abstract general, 253 54, 270 73, as slang, 260 63, 267 68, as stereotype, 267 73, and style, 310 16, *see also* Language, Words
- Dictionary a record of meanings, 256 59, sample derivations in, 257 59
- Differentia(ae) as core of extended definition, 51 60, in refining the defining process, 45 48
- Discourse argument as a kind of, 31 32, description as a kind of, 31 32, 170 72, as determined by intention, 31 33, exposition as a kind of, 31, 170, uses of exposition in, 41, forms of, 36 215, four kinds of, 31 32, main divisions of, 11-16, mixing kinds of, 32 33, narration and other kinds of, 31-

- 32, 212 14, research paper as expository, 318, special problems of, 218 316, specialized scientific, 281
- Dominant impression, 172 79
- Emphasis created by rhythm, 310 12, devices for achieving 16, 25 27, 225, faulty devices of, 27, as a function of coherence, 225, as an organizing principle, 25 26 by position of modifiers, 234 36, by sentence structure, 241 44, by shifting normal word, 232 33 *see also* Definition, Description, Exposition, Organization
- Equivocation, 151
- Event as cause, 96 97, as fact, 114, meaningful series, in narration, 193 97, 208 12, movement of, in time, 191 93, *see also* Action, Fact, Time
- Evidence acceptable to audience, 130 in argument, 125 30 established by verification or testimony, 126 28, evaluating authority as, 128 30, facts as, 126 28, opinion as, 128 30
- Exposition by analysis, 80 101, and appeal to specific interests 37 41, by classification 60 66, by comparison and contrast, 72 80 by definition 42 60, demands of diction in, 254, by extended definition, 51 60, by identification, 41 42, by illustration 66 72 methods of, 36 101, narrative as, 88 92, 199, 202 04, 205 06, value of tone for, 292
- Expository narration as distinguished from ordinary, 88 89
- Fact analysis and propositions of, 114 15, as evidence, 126 28, propositions of action or of, 108, *see also* Cause, Event
- Fallacies 150 54, and refutation, 153
- Fiction as one type of narration, 190n.
- Final version. writing and rewriting the, 339 56
- Finite verb 230, 230n, 231, 271, *see also* Verbals, Verbs
- Footnotes 333 37, and bibliography, form of, 333 38, samples, 334 36
- Frame image, 183 84
- Generalization in description, 169; as induction, 131 34, tests for valid, 132 34
- Generalized description 83 84, *see also* Description
- Genus and the common ground, 48 50, defined in relation to species, 46 48, as device to clarify a definition, 46 50, 57 60, illustrated diagrammatically, 47, 49, 57, *see also* Class, Differentia, Species
- Grammar and rhetoric of sentence, 229 48
- Identification as a method of exposition, 41 42
- Ignoring the question, 152
- Illustration employed as description, 71, as method of exposition, 66 72, in schematized and prose examples, 66 70, as way of thinking in classes, 67, *see also* Classification Definition
- Imagery achieved by the impressionistic method, 181 82, descriptive devices for creating, 172 84, metaphor as, 284 85, *see also* Dominant impression, Pattern, Texture
- Impressionism as visual description, 181 82, *see also* Imagery
- Induction as generalization, 131 34, by method of analogy, 134 38; *see also* Deduction, Proposition
- Inductive leap, 132
- Intention compelling, in narration, 190 91, 205, as determining, in analysis, 81, of the individual, in language mastery, 2 4, the main, 31 33, 205 06, *see also* Interest, Motivation, Purpose
- Interest area of, in comparison and contrast, 73 as a condition of cause, 94; decisive in description 182 83, as determinative of true

**Interest (Cont.):**

subject, 37-41; as key to unity, 17, 37-41; the main, 37-41, 207-08; value of, for exposition, tested, 37; *see also* Intention, Motivation, Purpose

**Introduction:** as limiting the subject, 11-12; and what it must accomplish, 11-15, 119-20, 198-99; *see also* Complication, Conclusion, Denouement, Exposition

**Irony,** 300-04, 313-71

**Issue:** locating, for analyzing propositions, 114-25, what constitutes, in argument, 113-14

**Jargon:** 268-73, and worn out metaphors, 277-78

**Language** and broad social experience, 6, choice of, in description, 177-79; and feeling, 3-5, force of, in persuasion, 162, growth of, by extension of meaning, 253-59; hackneyed, 266-73, metaphorical process in, 255-56, of the scientist, 249, 275, 281, 281*n*; shifts in meaning of, 250, and thinking and rhetoric, 28, and tone and attitude, 4, *see also* Diction, Meaning, Metaphor, Persuasion

**Loose sentences,** 243-44

**Meaning.** clarity of, and rhythm, 311-12, control of, by association, 249-50, 263-66, created by metaphor, 283-86, of events in narrative time, 193-97, language growth by extension of, 255-59, primary and implied, 249-50 shifts in, 250, tone as qualification of, 260-69, transfer of, in metaphor, 274, *see also* Action, Event

**Metaphor:** 274-90, confused and half dead, 274-75, 278-80, elements of comparison and contrast in, 286-90, as essential statement, 283-86, as expository illustration, 281-83; as expressing attitudes, and emotions, 275-76, 284, 287; function of, 280-86, importance

of, in everyday language, 275-86, in language growth, 255-56, mixed, 278-79, not necessary to scientific statement, 275, 281, 281*n*; and simile, 274*n*., as slang, 277, and style, 310, on what makes a "good," 286-90, the worn-out, and jargon, 277-78, *see also* Imagery, Language, Meaning

**Modifiers.** fixed (adjectival), 231, 233-36, misplaced, 239-40, movable (adverbial), 236-37, *see also* Emphasis

**Motivation,** 72-73, 83, 169-70, 193

**Narration:** 190-215, descriptive elements in, 171, 184, and diction, 254, expository, 88-92, 346, and expository narration compared, 190-91; fiction as one type of, 190*n*, meaning of action in, 193-97, and other kinds of discourse, 212-15; as patterned action, 197-205, from a point of view, 208-12; proportion of parts in, 205-07, time factor in, 191-93, *see also* Action, Event

**Non sequitur,** 152-53

**Note-taking:** and research paper preparation, 318-38, 341-42

**Nouns** descriptive use of, 177-79

**Occasion** and determining the introduction, 12-15, of a discourse, 12-13, for persuasion, 162-64

**Organization** coherence through, 17, 20-25, for comparison and contrast, 75-80, of the composition, 17-30, emphasis as a principle of, 17, 25-27, force of, in persuasion, 162, of paragraphs, 222-26, research paper, 343-56; shapes thought, 3, unity in, 17-20, *see also* Classification, Outline

**Originality.** and harmony, as adjuncts of style, 312-13, impress of personality in, 313

**Outline** 37, 111-13, 428-32, as means for coherence, 21-24, organized by paragraphs, 331-32, organized by topics, 329-30, preliminary or "scratch," 328-29, 343, as prepara-

- tion for writing, 332 33, 343, in sentence form 330 31, 347 48, *see also* Organization, Rewriting
- Overstatement and understatement, in effect of tone, 304 08
- Paragraph analysis and rewriting of, 346, 349, 354 56, as a convenience to reader, 218 19, linking one with another, 226 29, methods for organization of, 222 26, no formula for, 219, and the sentence, 218 48, structure and organization of, 220 26, transitional devices from paragraph to, 226 29, as unit of thought, 219 20
- Parallelism as adjustment of grammar to rhetoric, 240 41, violations of, 241
- Participle 230 n, 237 38, *see also* Dangling phrases
- Pattern 240, and interest, 182 83, mixing of, in description, 184 86, in narration, 197 203, and point of view, 179 82 and texture in description, 179 89
- Periodic sentences, 243 44
- Persuasion force of, in argument, 161 64, occasion for, and 'right way' of, 162 64
- Point of view in narration, 208 13 panoramic, 210, 212 and pattern in description, 179 82
- Position purely for emphasis, 26, 232 36
- Premise caution in stating 144 45, and the common ground, 150, major and minor, 223, in reasoning, 138 50, 154 223 *see also* Argument, Conclusion, Proposition, Reasoning
- Preparation and note taking, 318 338
- Principal parts of sentence, 231 32
- Proportion of part for emphasis, 26, of parts in narration, 205 07
- Proposition the clear, 108 10, as distinct from definition, 43 major and minor, 111 13, 115 25, as premise, 138 39, 140 45, 150, 154 the single, 110 11, statement of, as basis for argument, 107 08, 151, statement of, as introduction, 119 20, two kinds of, 108, *see also* Argument, Class, Premise, Reasoning
- Propositions of action and analysis, 115 25
- Propositions of fact and analysis, 114 15
- Purpose in argument, 103 04, three types of, for comparison and contrast, 74, *see also* Intention, Interest, Motivation
- Question background of the, 120; begging the, 151-52, ignoring the, 152
- Reason and argument, 103 04, 125, 131 and persuasion, 161
- Reasoning 56, 46 47, 93-94, in argument, 103 06, 110 24, 131-58, about cause, 94 97, conditional, 147 49 deductive, 138 50, 154 59, by *either or*, 147 48, fallacious, 150 54, by *if*, 148 50, inductive, 131 38, negative pattern of, 148, premise in, 138 50, slips in, 145 47 *see also* Argument, Class, Classification, Proposition
- Research paper 318 56, bibliography for, 320 25, 337 38, final version of writing and rewriting, 339 56 first draft of, 343 46, foot notes, 333 37, 349 53, preparation and note taking, 325 28, 341 42, recast, 346 49, rewritten, 346 56, sources for, primary and secondary 319 20
- Rewriting 225, 346 56, and writing, 339 56
- Rhetoric and grammar of sentence, 229 48 place of sentence structure in 240 44 and thinking and language 28
- Rhythm and clarity of meaning, 311 12, and style, 310 13
- Sample research paper, 357 70
- Selection in description 174 77, 179 80, 182, in narration, 207 08, for vividness, 174 76 207 08
- Senses reliance on in metaphor,

**Senses (Cont.):**

175-84; and suggestive description, 167-69

**Sentence:** length and variation of, 244-46; locating the topic, 220-22, 225; loose and periodic, 243-44; normal word order of, 230-32; and the paragraph, 218-48; parts of a, 231-32; principles governing structure of, 240-46; *see also* Organization, Paragraph, Rhetoric

**Sentence structure:** general principles of, 240-46; and style, 310-13

**Sharp focus:** as narrative point of view, 211-12

**Simile:** *see* Metaphor

**Slang:** 260-62; and jargon, 267-73; as metaphor, 277

**Sources:** primary and secondary, for research paper, 319-20; for term paper, 340-42

**Species:** defined in relation to genus, 46-48; illustrated diagrammatically, 57; part of definition, 46-48, 57, 60; *see also* Class, Differentia, Genus

**"Squinting" construction,** 236-37

**Stereotypes:** and jargon, 268-73; including slang, 267-68, 277

**Structure:** of the paragraph, 220-26; of the sentence, 240-46, 310-13

**Style:** components of, 310-16; defined, 310; harmony and originality as adjuncts of, 312-13; tone as an aspect of, 291-313

**Subject:** attitude toward, 293; bibliographical, 326-28; exposition as clarifying device for, 36-41; finding the true, 10, 17-20, 340, 346; interest as guide to the true, 37-40; of a sentence, 229; true, as means to unity, 17-20

**Subordination:** and coordination, grammar reflecting rhetoric, 241-43

**Suggestive description:** 82-83, 165-70; to define atmosphere, 173-74; and the senses, 167-69; uses of, in expository writing, 169-70; *see also* Description, Exposition, Narration

**Technical (or expository) description:** and analysis, 82-84

**Texture:** and pattern in description, 179-89

**Thinking:** a capacity for straight, 5-6; and rhetoric and language, 2-8; shading and feeling, 3-4; *see also* Reasoning

**Tone:** 163, 291-316; determined by special and ideal audiences, 309-10; effect of over- and understatement on, 304-08; as expression of attitude toward audiences, 291-92, 294-95; as expression of attitude toward subject, 293; importance of, for communication, 292; ironical, 300-04; and other components of style, 310-16; as qualification of meaning, 296-309; *see also* Audience, Occasion

**Topic sentence:** as way to organize paragraph, 220-22

**Transitions:** as connecting paragraphs, 226-29

**Understatement:** and overstatement, in effect on tone, 304-08

**Uniformity:** 131-32; in causal analysis, 95-96

**Unity:** descriptive devices for achieving, 179-84; as governing selection of detail, 179-80; as an organizing principle, 17-20; in paragraphs, 224-25

**Verbals,** 178-79, 230

**Verbs:** in description, 177-79; finite, 230, 230*n.*, 231, 271; position of, in sentence, 231-33

**Word order:** normal in sentence, 230-32, 271; shifts in normal, for emphasis, 232-33; *see also* Modifiers, Paragraph, Sentence

**Words:** appropriateness of, 260-73, choice of the right, 9, 177-79, 249, 253; derivation of, 60*n.*, 256-59; misuse of abstract-general, 253-54, 270-73; worn-out, and clichés, 266-73; *see also* Diction, Emphasis, Language, Metaphor

